LIFE HOUSE

Based on the **Life House** writings and materials by

Pete Townshend

LIFE house™

Based on *Life House* by
Pete Townshend

Story by
James Harvey and David Hine

Script by
David Hine

Art by
James Harvey and Max Prentis

Inks by
Mick Gray

Colors by
Max Prentis and Shari Chankhamma

Letters by
Micah Myers

Cover by
James Harvey

Art Director
Jeff Krelitz

Publisher
Jeff Krelitz

Project Manager and Editor
Hannah Means-Shannon

Production Editor
Dan Berger

Graphic Services
Dean Paris

IMAGE COMICS, INC. • Robert Kirkman: Chief Operating Officer • Erik Larsen: Chief Financial Officer • Todd McFarlane: President • Marc Silvestri: Chief Executive Officer • Jim Valentino: Vice President • Eric Stephenson: Publisher / Chief Creative Officer • Nicole Lapalme: Vice President of Finance • Leanna Caunter: Accounting Analyst • Sue Korpela: Accounting & HR Manager • Matt Parkinson: Vice President of Sales & Publishing Planning • Lorelei Bunjes: Vice President of Digital Strategy • Dirk Wood: Vice President of International Sales & Licensing • Ryan Brewer: International Sales & Licensing Manager • Alex Cox: Director of Direct Market Sales • Chloe Ramos: Book Market & Library Sales Manager • Emilio Bautista: Digital Sales Coordinator • Jon Schlaffman: Specialty Sales Coordinator • Kat Salazar: Vice President of PR & Marketing • Deanna Phelps: Marketing Design Manager • Drew Fitzgerald: Marketing Content Associate • Heather Doornink: Vice President of Production • Drew Gill: Art Director • Hilary DiLoreto: Print Manager • Tricia Ramos: Traffic Manager • Melissa Gifford: Content Manager • Erika Schnatz: Senior Production Artist • Wesley Griffith: Production Artist • Rich Fowlks: Production Artist • IMAGECOMICS.COM

Chapter One
Page 1

Chapter Two
Page 31

Chapter Three
Page 64

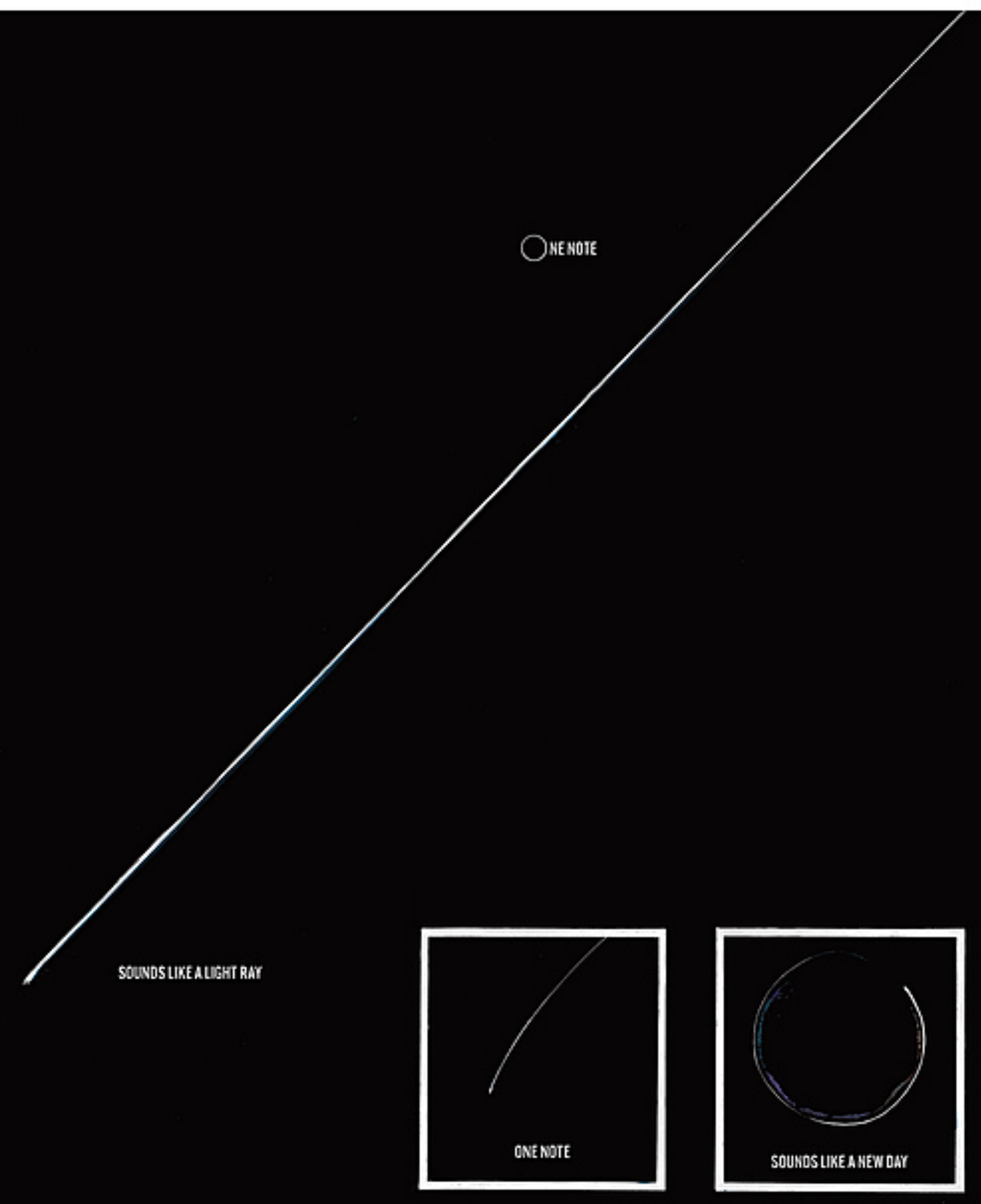
Chapter Four
Page 93

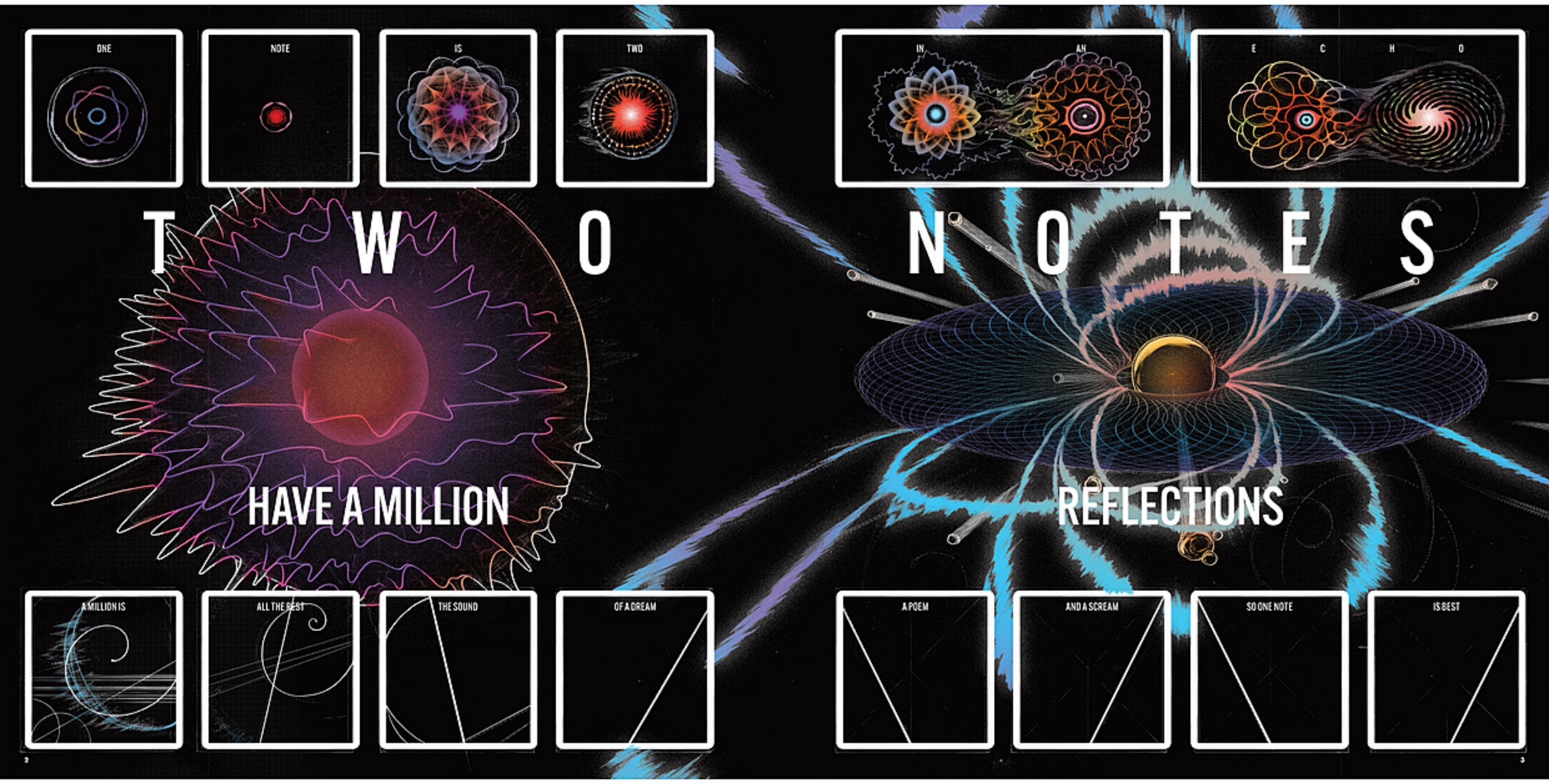
Chapter Five
Page 121

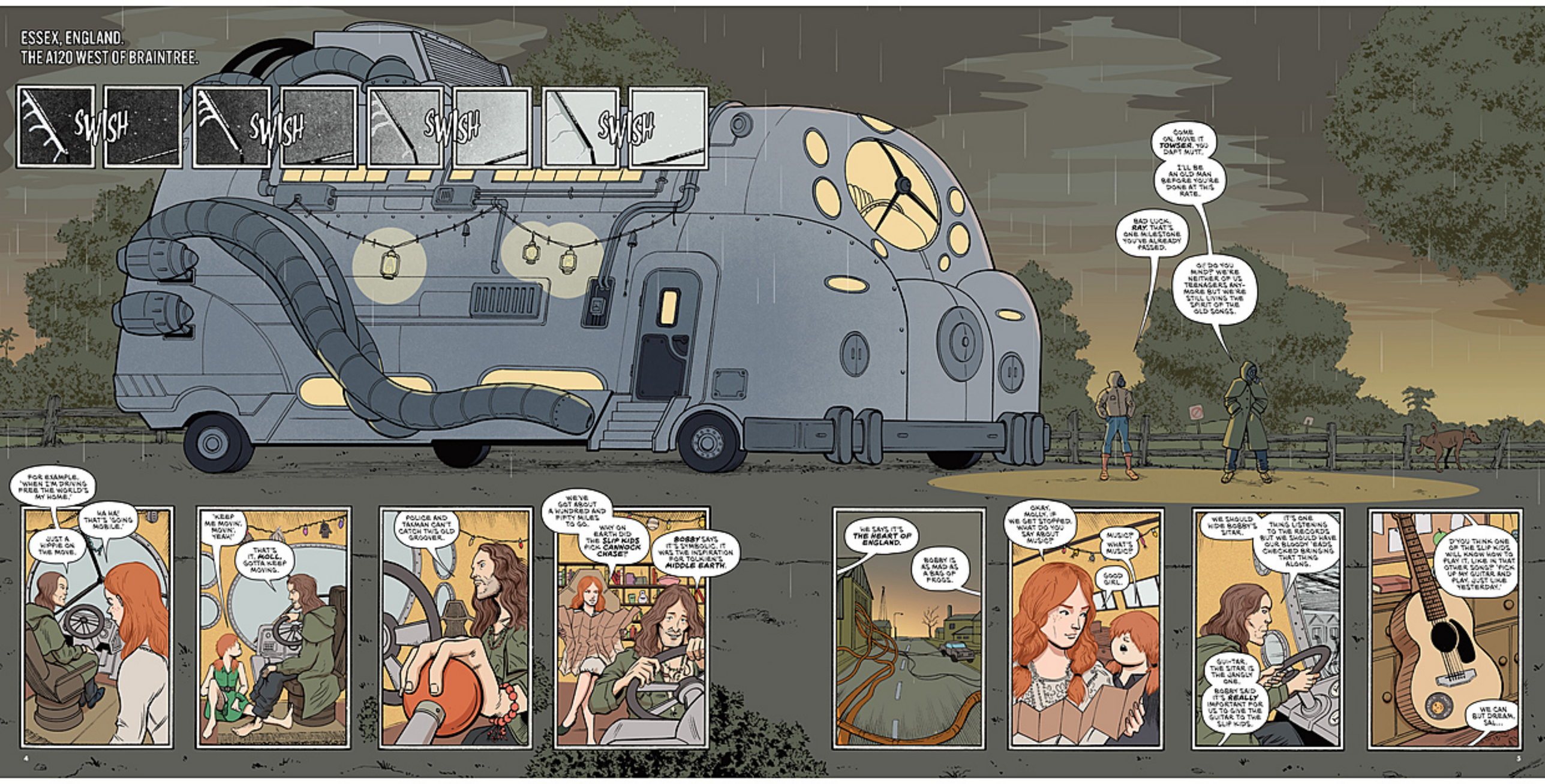
Concept Art Gallery
Page 154

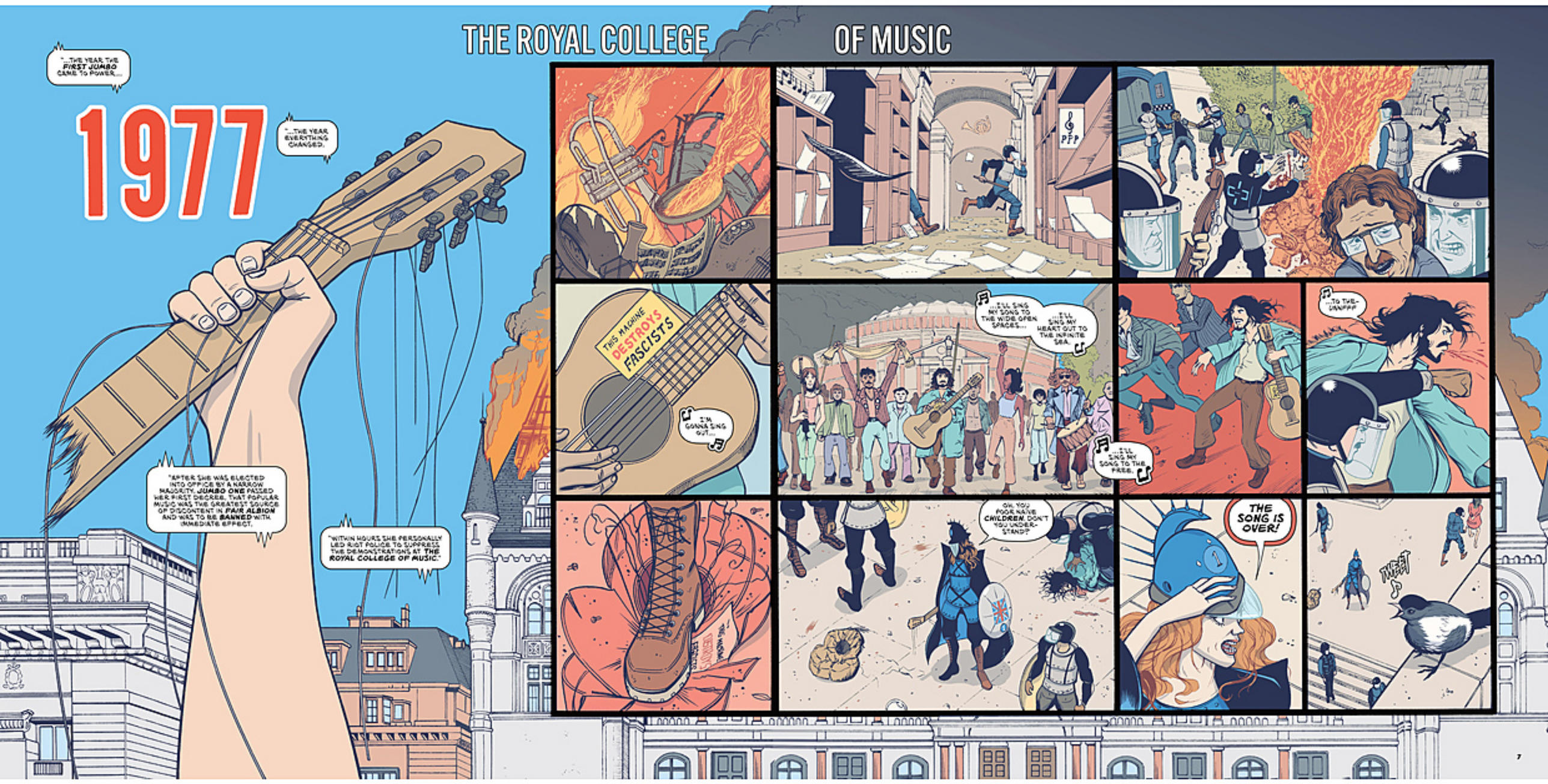
PETE TOWNSHEND'S LIFE HOUSE. First printing. December 2023. Published by Image Comics, Inc. Office of publication: PO BOX 14457, Portland, OR 97293. Copyright © 2023 Eel Pie Recording Productions Ltd and Rockbox Ventures, LLC. All rights reserved. "Life House," its logos, and the likenesses of all characters herein are trademarks of Eel Pie Recording Productions Ltd and Rockbox Ventures, LLC unless otherwise noted. "Image" and the Image Comics logos are registered trademarks of Image Comics, Inc. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means (except for short excerpts for journalistic or review purposes), without the express written permission of Eel Pie Recording Productions Ltd and Rockbox Ventures, LLC, or Image Comics, Inc. All names, characters, events, and locales in this publication are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, or places, without satirical intent, is coincidental. Digital edition. For international rights, contact: foreignlicensing@imagecomics.com.

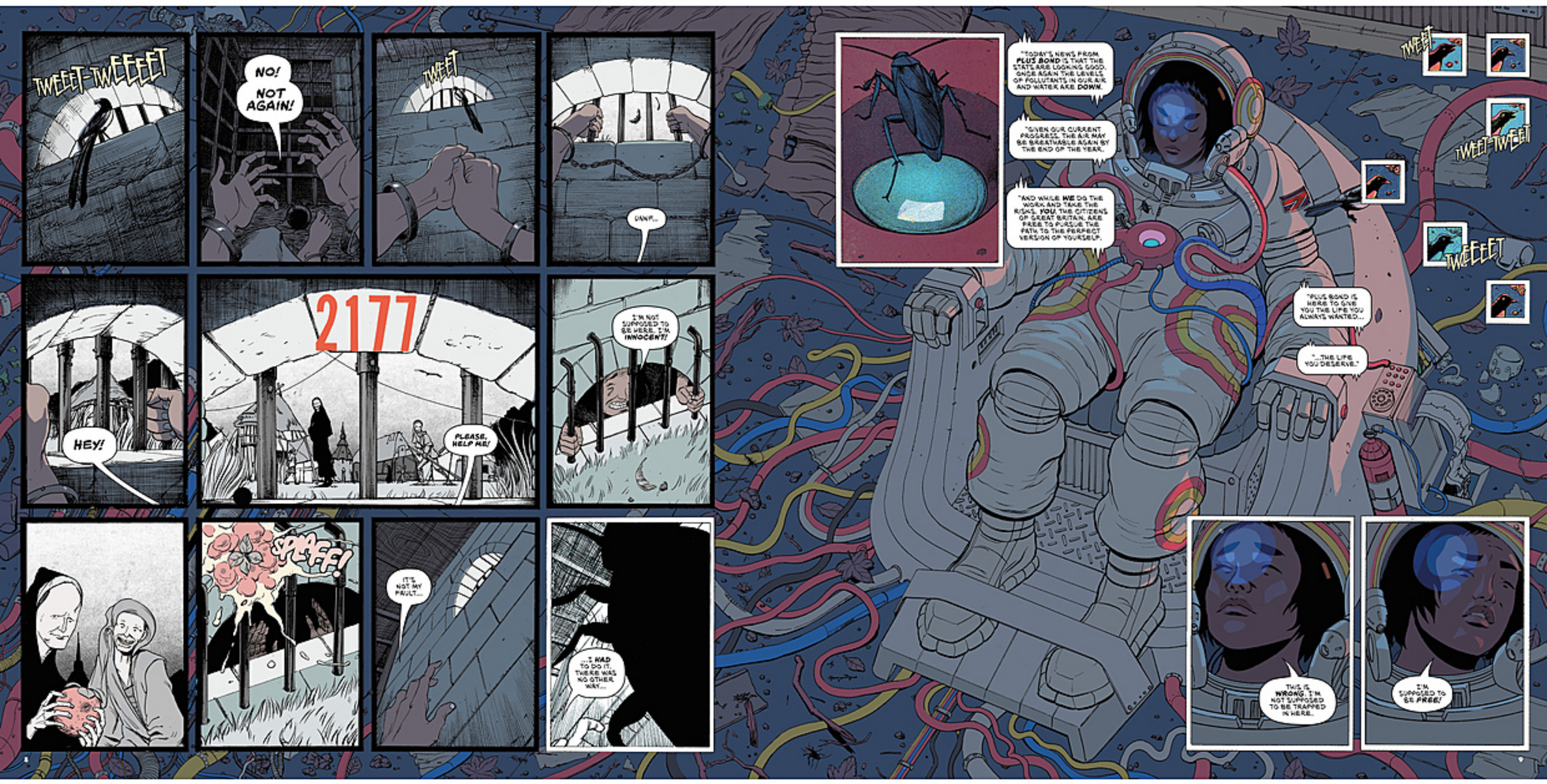
CHAPTER ONE

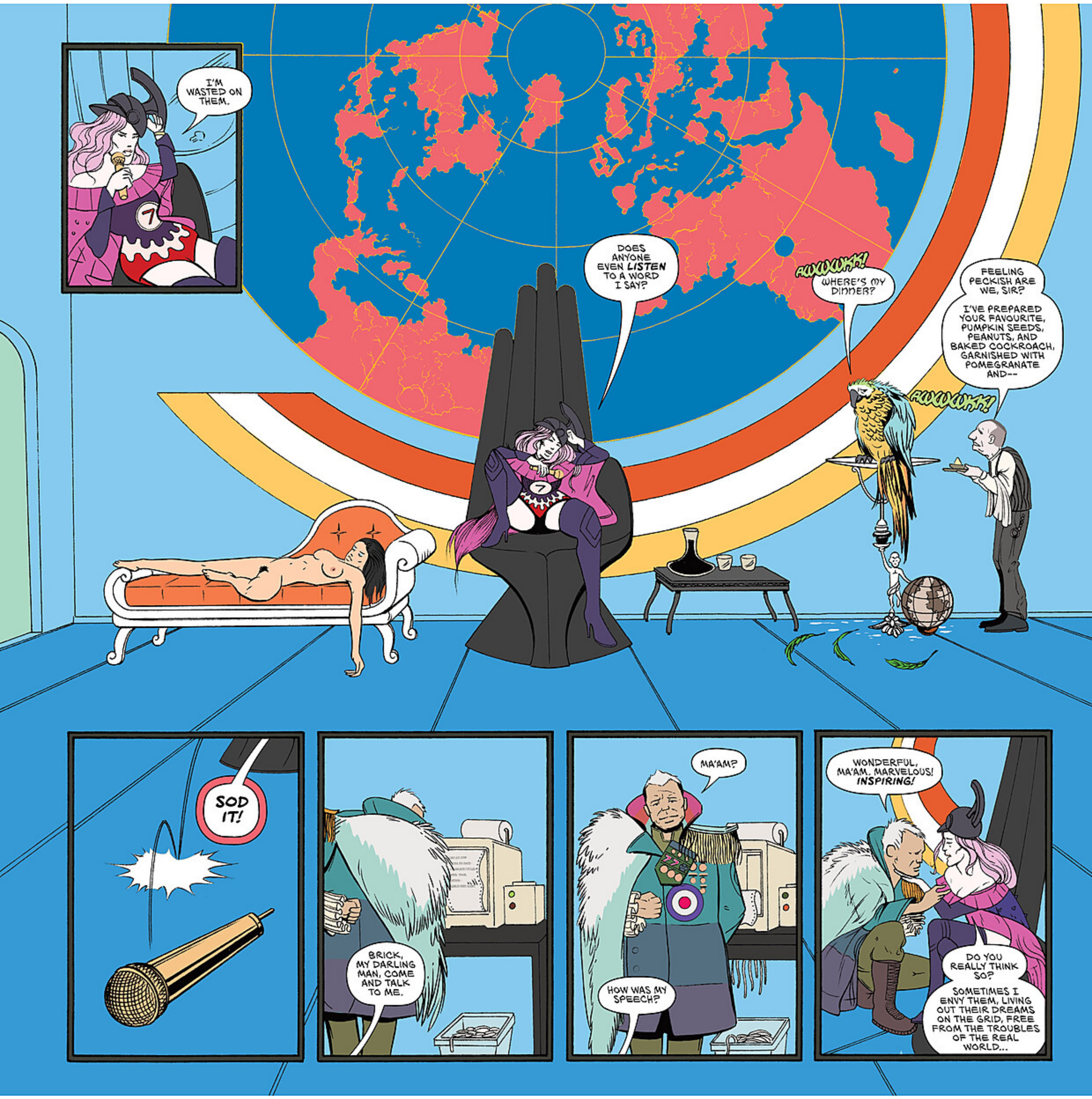

ONE NOTE
SOUNDS LIKE A LIGHT RAY
ONE NOTE
SOUNDS LIKE A NEW DAY


ONE
NOTE
IS
TWO
IN
AN
E
C
H
O
T W O
N O T E S
HAVE A MILLION
REFLECTIONS
A MILLION IS
ALL THE BEST
THE SOUND
OF A DREAM
A POEM
AND A SCREAM
SO ONE NOTE
IS BEST


ESSEX, ENGLAND.
THE A120 WEST OF BRAINTREE.
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
COME ON, MOVE IT TOWSER. YOU DAFT MUTT.
I'LL BE AN OLD MAN BEFORE YOU'RE DONE AT THIS RATE.
BAD LUCK, RAY. THAT'S ONE MILESTONE YOU'VE ALREADY PASSED.
OI! DO YOU MINDP WE'RE NEITHER OF US TEENAGERS ANYMORE BUT WE'RE STILL LIVING THE SPIRIT OF THE OLD SONGS.
FOR EXAMPLE, 'WHEN I'M DRIVING FREE THE WORLD'S MY HOME.'
JUST A HIPPIE ON THE MOVE.
HA HA! THAT'S 'GOING MOBILE.'
'KEEP ME MOVIN', MOVIN', YEAH.'
THAT'S IT, MOLL. GOTTA KEEP MOVING.
POLICE AND TALMAN CAN'T CATCH THIS OLD GROOVER.
WE'VE GOT ABOUT A HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILES TO GO.
WHY ON EARTH DID THE SLIP KIDS PICK CANNOCK CHASE?
BOBBY SAYS IT'S SYMBOLIC. IT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE EARTH.
HE SAYS IT'S THE HEART OF ENGLAND.
BOBBY IS AS MAD AS A BAG OF FROGS.
OKAY, MOLLY, IF WE GET STOPPED, WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT MUSIC?
MUSIC? WHAT'S MUSIC?
GOOD GIRL.
WE SHOULD HIDE BOBBY'S SITAR.
IT'S ONE THING LISTENING TO THE RECORDS BUT WE SHOULD HAVE OUR BLOODY 'EADS CHECKED BRINGING THAT THING ALONG.
GUI-TAR. THE SITAR IS THE JANGLY ONE.
BOBBY SAID IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT FOR US TO GIVE THE GUITAR TO THE SLIP KIDS.
D'YOU THINK ONE OF THE SLIP KIDS WILL KNOW HOW TO PLAY IT, LIKE IN THAT OTHER SONG? 'PICK UP MY GUITAR AND PLAY JUST LIKE YESTERDAY.'
WE CAN BUT DREAM, SAL...

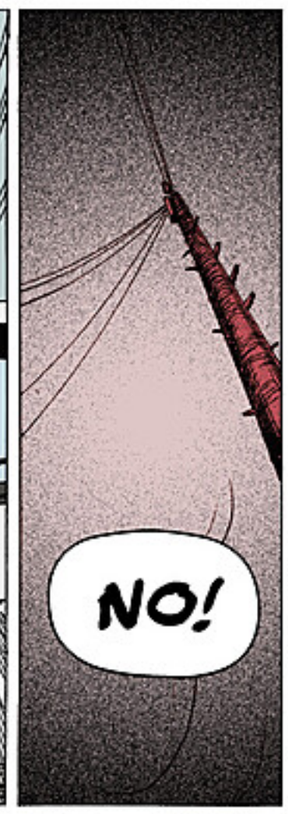
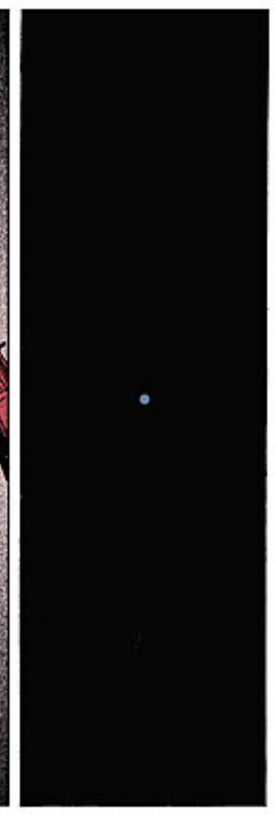

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC
"...THE YEAR THE FIRST JUMBO CAME TO POWER...
1977
"...THE YEAR EVERYTHING CHANGED.
"AFTER SHE WAS ELECTED INTO OFFICE BY A NARROW MAJORITY, JUMBO ONE PASSED HER FIRST DECREE. THAT POPULAR MUSIC WAS THE GREATEST SOURCE OF DISCONTENT IN FAIR ALBION AND WAS TO BE BANNED WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT.
"WITHIN HOURS SHE PERSONALLY LED RIOT POLICE TO SUPPRESS THE DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC."
THIS MACHINE DESTROYS FASCISTS
...I'M GONNA SING OUT...
...I'LL SING MY SONG TO THE WIDE OPEN SPACES...
...I'LL SING MY HEART OUT TO THE INFINITE SEA.
...I'LL SING MY SONG TO THE FREE.
...TO THE-UNNFFF
OH, YOU POOR NAIVE CHILDREN. DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND?
THE SONG IS OVER!
TWEET

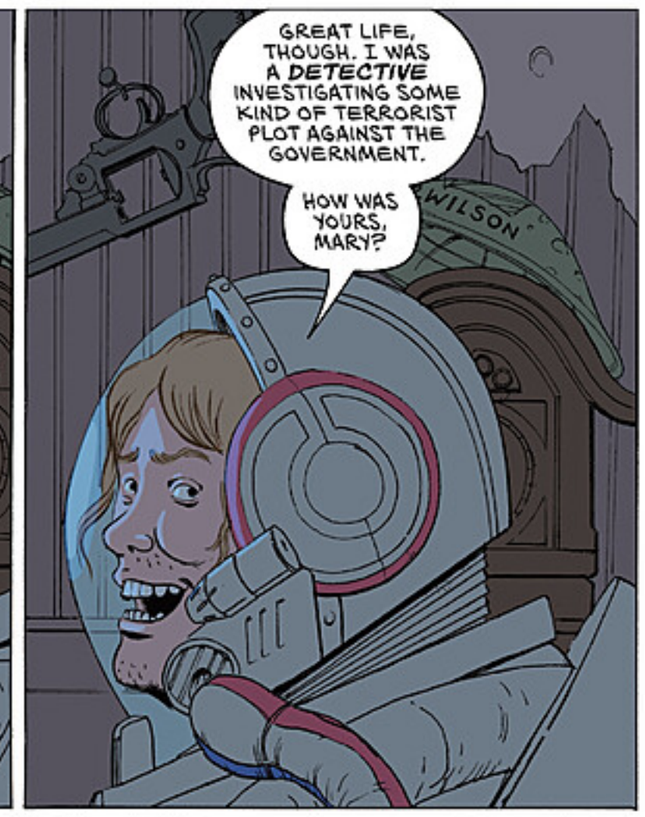

TWEEET-TWEEEET
NO! NOT AGAIN!
TWEET
DANG...
HEY!
2177
PLEASE, HELP ME!
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE. I'M INNOCENT!
SPLAFF!
IT'S NOT MY FAULT...
...I HAD TO DO IT. THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY...
"TODAY'S NEWS FROM PLUS BOND IS THAT THE STATS ARE LOOKING GOOD. ONCE AGAIN THE LEVELS OF POLLUTANTS IN OUR AIR AND WATER ARE DOWN.
"GIVEN OUR CURRENT PROGRESS, THE AIR MAY BE BREATHABLE AGAIN BY THE END OF THE YEAR.
"AND WHILE WE DO THE WORK AND TAKE THE RISKS, YOU, THE CITIZENS OF GREAT BRITAIN, ARE FREE TO PURSUE THE PATH TO THE PERFECT VERSION OF YOURSELF.
"PLUS BOND IS HERE TO GIVE YOU THE LIFE YOU ALWAYS WANTED...
"...THE LIFE YOU DESERVE."
TWEET
TWEET-TWEET
TWEEEET
THIS IS WRONG. I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE TRAPPED IN HERE.
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE FREE!

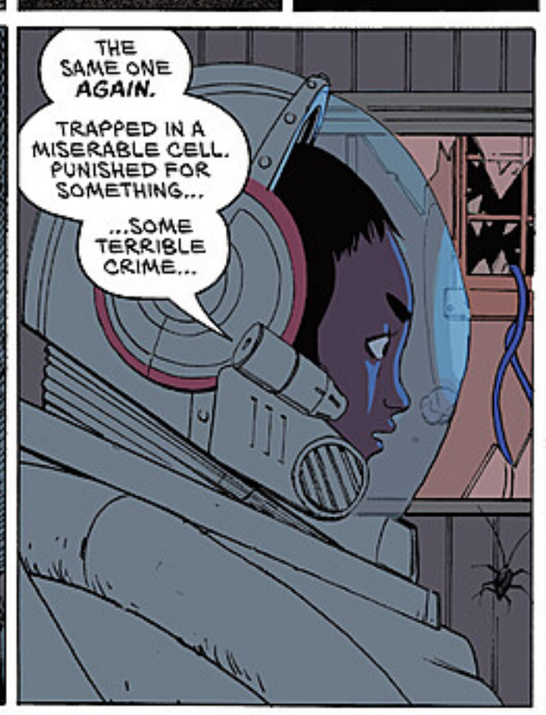
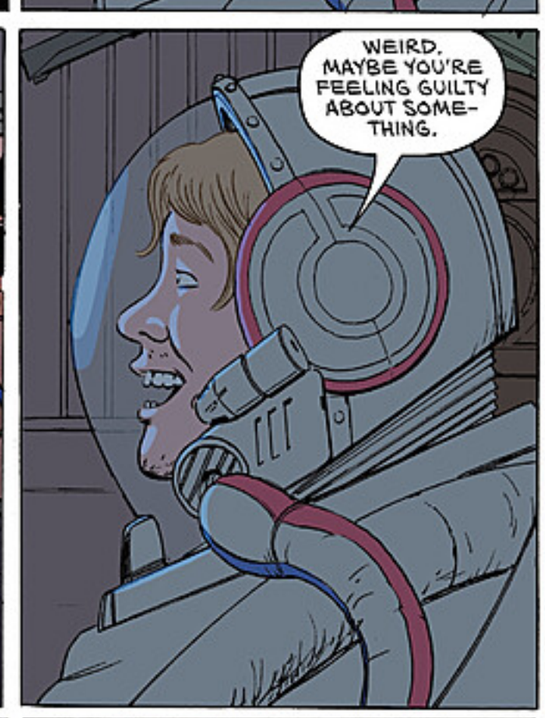

I'M WASTED ON THEM.
DOES ANYONE EVEN LISTEN TO A WORD I SAY?
AUUUUUK!
WHERE'S MY DINNER?
FEELING PECKISH ARE WE, SIR?
I'VE PREPARED YOUR FAVOURITE, PUMPKIN SEEDS, PEANUTS, AND BAKED COCKROACH, GARNISHED WITH POMEGRANATE AND--
AUUUUUK!
SOD IT!
BRICK, MY DARLING MAN, COME AND TALK TO ME.
MA'AM?
HOW WAS MY SPEECH?
WONDERFUL, MA'AM. MARVELOUS! INSPIRING!
DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?
SOMETIMES I ENVY THEM, LIVING OUT THEIR DREAMS ON THE GRID, FREE FROM THE TROUBLES OF THE REAL WORLD...

"AND NOW WE HAND YOU OVER TO OUR BELOVED LEADER AND SUPREME COMMANDER...
"...JUMBO SEVEN!"
MY PEOPLE! MY CHILDREN! AS WE APPROACH OUR SECOND CENTENARY, WE CELEBRATE THE MOMENT WHEN MY PREDECESSOR, JUMBO ONE, DECLARED BRITAIN'S INDEPENDENCE...
...BY ENDING OUR ALLIANCE WITH EUROPE AND REFUSING TO ALLOW AMERICAN NUCLEAR MISSILES ON BRITISH SOIL.
THANKS TO HER, GREAT BRITAIN WAS SPARED THE DEVASTATION THAT CONSUMED THE REST OF THE WORLD.
THANKS TO ME, BRITAIN CONTINUES TO BE SAFE FROM THREATS BOTH FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC.
SAFE FROM WAR, POLLUTION, AND THE MORAL DANGERS OF MUSIC, YOU CAN REST SAFE IN THE ARMS OF GRID SLEEP, WHERE YOU ENJOY A LIFE MORE BEAUTIFUL, MORE FULFILLING THAN OUR ANCESTORS COULD EVER HAVE IMAGINED.
AS THE GRID BRINGS ALL OF US CLOSER TO THAT STATE OF GRACE ACHIEVED BY THE SAINTS OF THE CHRISTIAN EPOCH, THERE IS A GROWING FEELING HERE AT PLUS BOND THAT THE FIRST SILVER CHILD WILL SOON BE WITH US.
THANK YOU ALL FOR KEEPING THE FAITH.
MAY THE UNION PREVAIL...

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE!
TURN

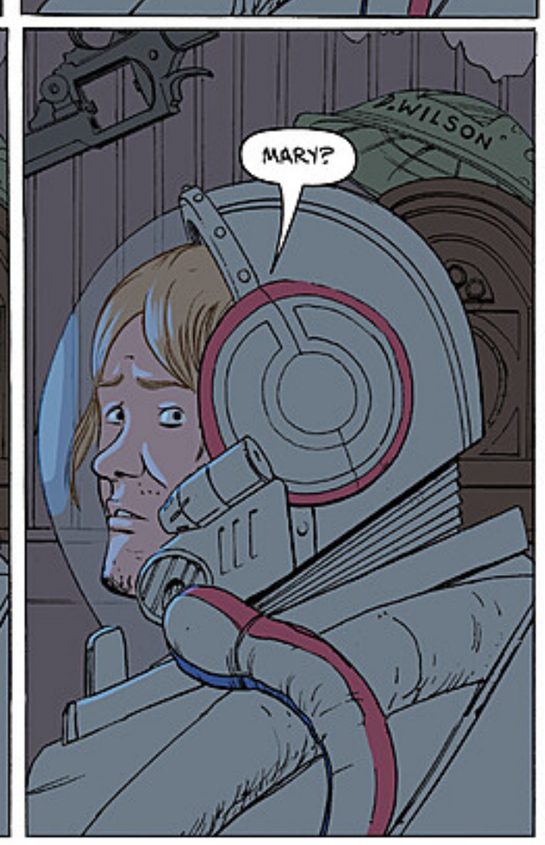
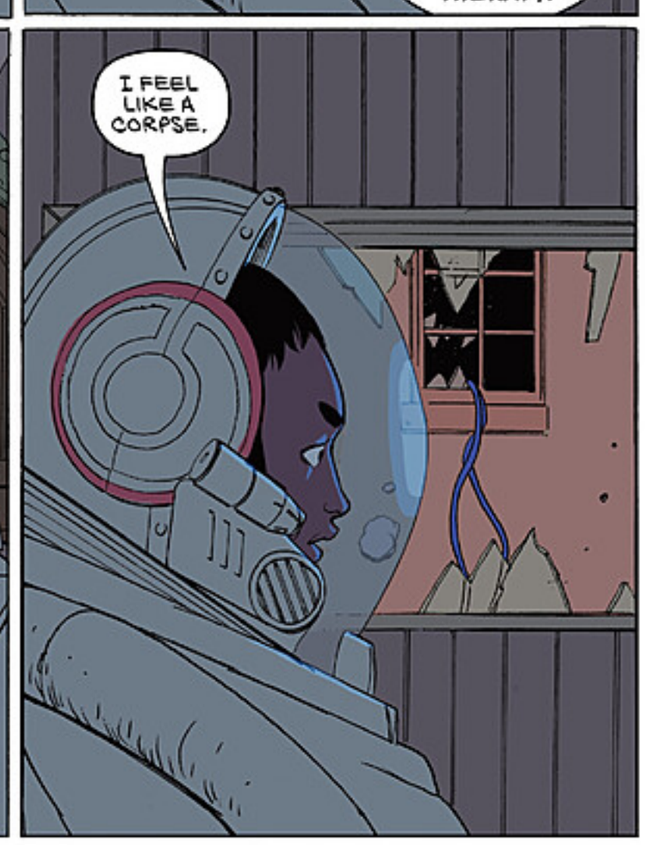
LOOK OUT, YOU IDIOT!

NO!


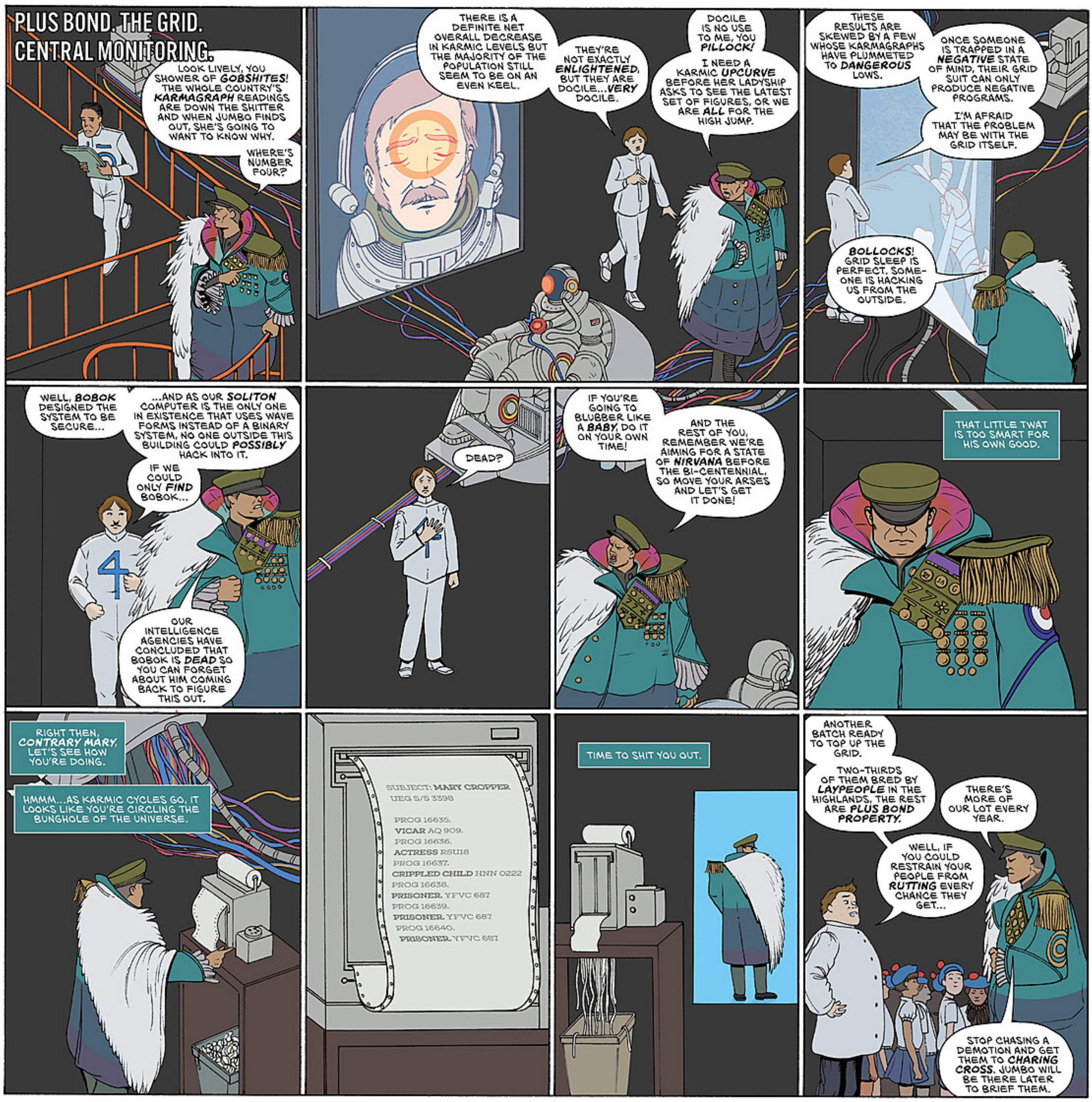
I DON'T BELIEVE IT. I FROZE LIKE AN IDIOT.
THE BASTARD RAN ME DOWN!

GREAT LIFE, THOUGH. I WAS A DETECTIVE INVESTIGATING SOME KIND OF TERRORIST PLOT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.
HOW WAS YOURS, MARY?

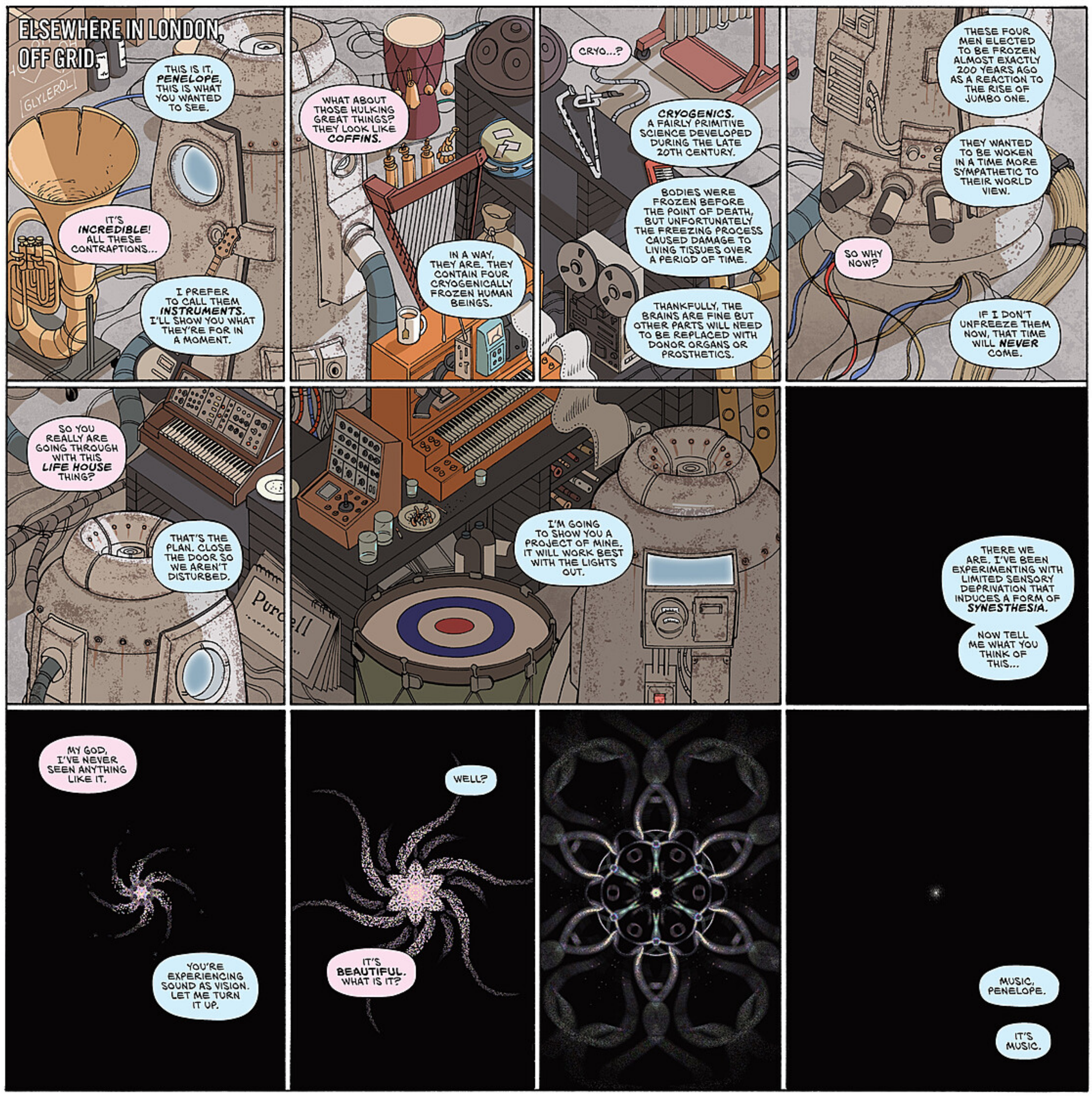

THE SAME ONE AGAIN.
TRAPPED IN A MISERABLE CELL. PUNISHED FOR SOMETHING...
...SOME TERRIBLE CRIME...

WEIRD. MAYBE YOU'RE FEELING GUILTY ABOUT SOME-THING.

LIKE WHAT? ALL I'VE EVER DONE IS SIT IN THIS CHAIR MY WHOLE LIFE.
AT LEAST YOU HAD A FEW YEARS IN THE ARMY.
MAYBE THE DREAMS ARE SOME KIND OF... I DON'T KNOW... SOME KIND OF THERAPY.

WHAT KIND OF THERAPY PUTS YOU THROUGH THE SAME ENDLESS TORMENT OVER AND OVER?
GRID LIFE ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THIS.

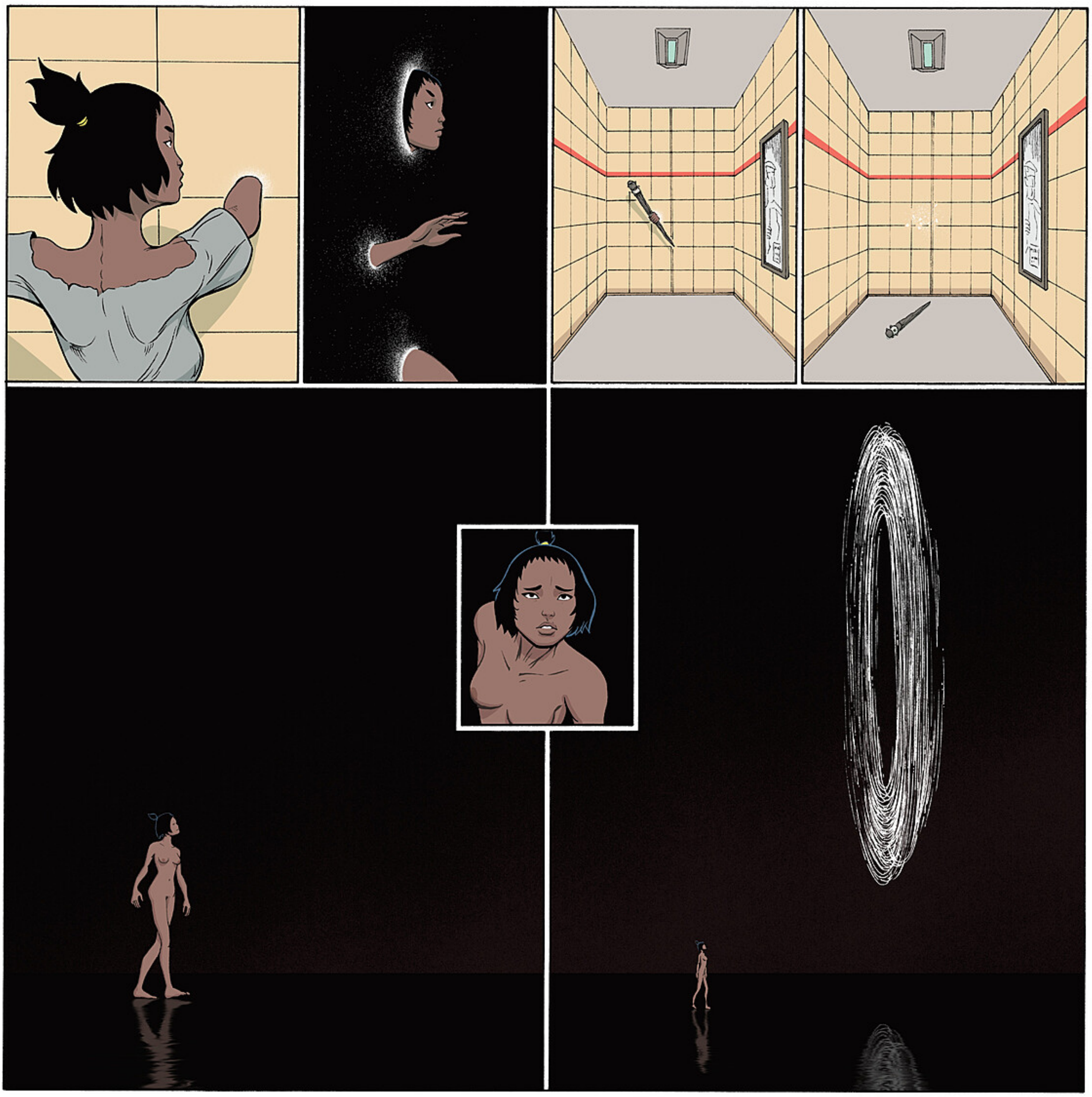
THE GRID DOESN'T MAKE MISTAKES. MAYBE IT'S TOUGHENING YOU UP. THE ARMY WAS LIKE THAT.
YOU HATE IT, BUT IT DOES YOU GOOD. BUILDS CHARACTER. PREPARES YOU FOR LIFE.

MARY?

I FEEL LIKE A CORPSE.

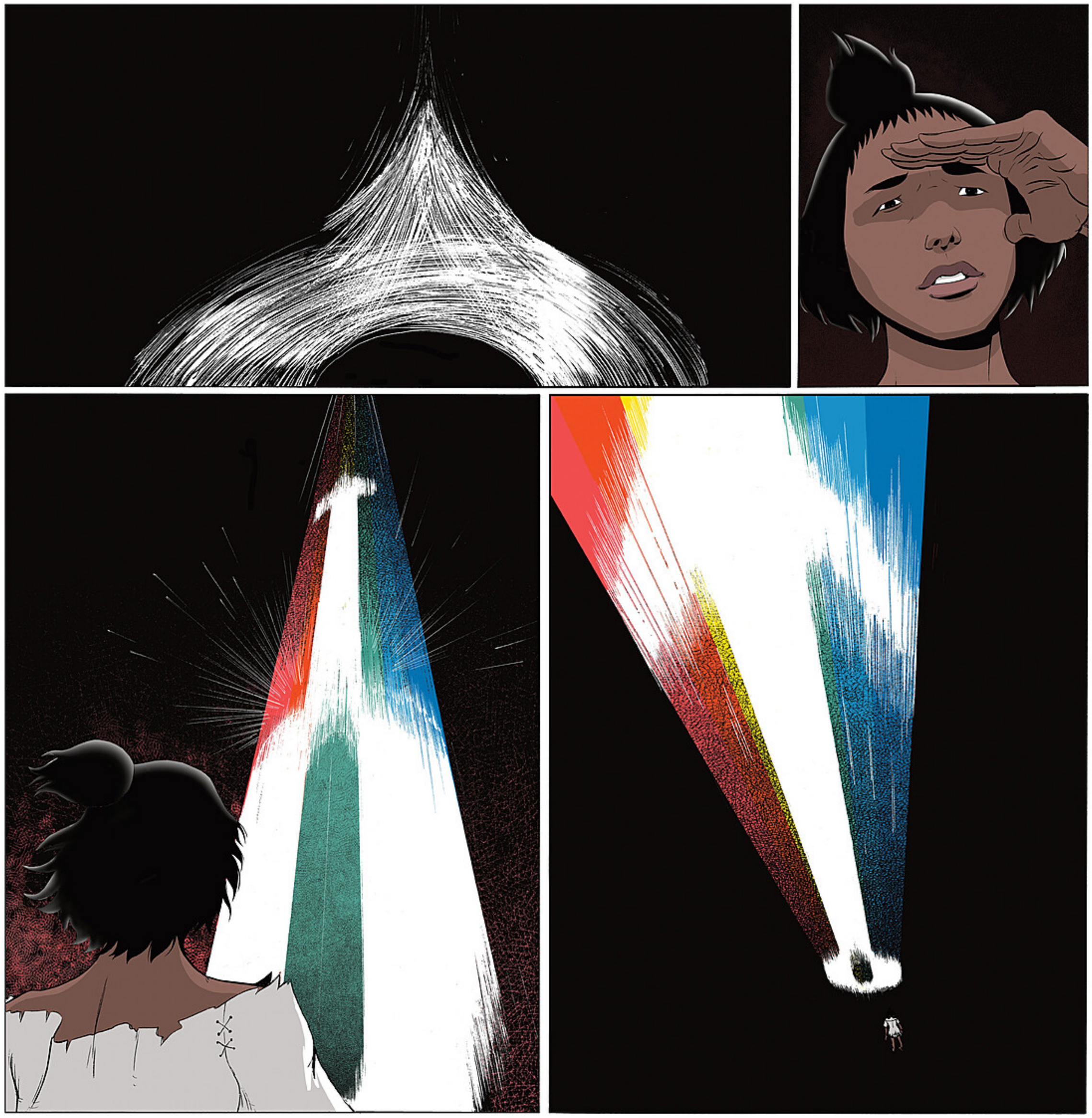

PLUS BOND. THE GRID. CENTRAL MONITORING.
LOOK LIVELY, YOU SHOWER OF GOBSHITES! THE WHOLE COUNTRY'S KARMAGRAPH READINGS ARE DOWN THE SHITTER AND WHEN JUMBO FINDS OUT, SHE'S GOING TO WANT TO KNOW WHY.
WHERE'S NUMBER FOUR?
THERE IS A DEFINITE NET OVERALL DECREASE IN KARMIC LEVELS BUT THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION STILL SEEM TO BE ON AN EVEN KEEL.
THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY ENLIGHTENED, BUT THEY ARE DOCILE...VERY DOCILE.
DOCILE IS NO USE TO ME, YOU PILLOCK!
I NEED A KARMIC UPCURVE BEFORE HER LADYSHIP ASKS TO SEE THE LATEST SET OF FIGURES, OR WE ARE ALL FOR THE HIGH JUMP.
THESE RESULTS ARE SKEWED BY A FEW WHOSE KARMAGRAPHS HAVE PLUMMETED TO DANGEROUS LOWS.
ONCE SOMEONE IS TRAPPED IN A NEGATIVE STATE OF MIND, THEIR GRID SUIT CAN ONLY PRODUCE NEGATIVE PROGRAMS.
I'M AFRAID THAT THE PROBLEM MAY BE WITH THE GRID ITSELF.
BOLLOCKS! GRID SLEEP IS PERFECT. SOMEONE IS HACKING US FROM THE OUTSIDE.
WELL, BOBOK DESIGNED THE SYSTEM TO BE SECURE...
...AND AS OUR SOLITON COMPUTER IS THE ONLY ONE IN EXISTENCE THAT USES WAVE FORMS INSTEAD OF A BINARY SYSTEM, NO ONE OUTSIDE THIS BUILDING COULD POSSIBLY HACK INTO IT.
IF WE COULD ONLY FIND BOBOK...
OUR INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES HAVE CONCLUDED THAT BOBOK IS DEAD SO YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT HIM COMING BACK TO FIGURE THIS OUT.
DEAD?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BLUBBER LIKE A BABY, DO IT ON YOUR OWN TIME!
AND THE REST OF YOU, REMEMBER WE'RE AIMING FOR A STATE OF NIRVANA BEFORE THE BI-CENTENNIAL, SO MOVE YOUR ARSES AND LET'S GET IT DONE!
THAT LITTLE TWAT IS TOO SMART FOR HIS OWN GOOD.
RIGHT THEN, CONTRARY MARY, LET'S SEE HOW YOU'RE DOING.
HMMM...AS KARMIC CYCLES GO, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE CIRCLING THE BUNGHOLE OF THE UNIVERSE.
SUBJECT: MARY CROPPER
UEG S/S 3398
PROG 16635.
VICAR AQ 909.
PROG 16636.
ACTRESS RSU18
PROG 16637.
CRIPPLED CHILD HNN 0222
PROG 16638.
PRISONER. YFVC 687
PROG 16639.
PRISONER. YFVC 687
PROG 16640.
PRISONER. YFVC 687
TIME TO SHIT YOU OUT.
ANOTHER BATCH READY TO TOP UP THE GRID.
TWO-THIRDS OF THEM BRED BY LAYPEOPLE IN THE HIGHLANDS, THE REST ARE PLUS BOND PROPERTY.
THERE'S MORE OF OUR LOT EVERY YEAR.
WELL, IF YOU COULD RESTRAIN YOUR PEOPLE FROM RUTTING EVERY CHANCE THEY GET...
STOP CHASING A DEMOTION AND GET THEM TO CHARING CROSS. JUMBO WILL BE THERE LATER TO BRIEF THEM.


ELSEWHERE IN LONDON, OFF GRID.
THIS IS IT, PENELOPE, THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED TO SEE.
IT'S INCREDIBLE! ALL THESE CONTRAPTIONS...
I PREFER TO CALL THEM INSTRUMENTS. I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT THEY'RE FOR IN A MOMENT.
WHAT ABOUT THOSE HULKING GREAT THINGS? THEY LOOK LIKE COFFINS.
IN A WAY, THEY ARE. THEY CONTAIN FOUR CRYOGENICALLY FROZEN HUMAN BEINGS.
CRYO...?
CRYOGENICS. A FAIRLY PRIMITIVE SCIENCE DEVELOPED DURING THE LATE 20TH CENTURY.
BODIES WERE FROZEN BEFORE THE POINT OF DEATH, BUT UNFORTUNATELY THE FREEZING PROCESS CAUSED DAMAGE TO LIVING TISSUES OVER A PERIOD OF TIME.
THANKFULLY, THE BRAINS ARE FINE BUT OTHER PARTS WILL NEED TO BE REPLACED WITH DONOR ORGANS OR PROSTHETICS.
THESE FOUR MEN ELECTED TO BE FROZEN ALMOST EXACTLY 200 YEARS AGO AS A REACTION TO THE RISE OF JUMBO ONE.
THEY WANTED TO BE WOKEN IN A TIME MORE SYMPATHETIC TO THEIR WORLD VIEW.
SO WHY NOW?
IF I DON'T UNFREEZE THEM NOW, THAT TIME WILL NEVER COME.
SO YOU REALLY ARE GOING THROUGH WITH THIS LIFE HOUSE THING?
THAT'S THE PLAN. CLOSE THE DOOR SO WE AREN'T DISTURBED.
I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU A PROJECT OF MINE. IT WILL WORK BEST WITH THE LIGHTS OUT.
THERE WE ARE. I'VE BEEN EXPERIMENTING WITH LIMITED SENSORY DEPRIVATION THAT INDUCES A FORM OF SYNESTHESIA.
NOW TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK OF THIS...
MY GOD, I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
YOU'RE EXPERIENCING SOUND AS VISION. LET ME TURN IT UP.
WELL?
IT'S BEAUTIFUL. WHAT IS IT?
MUSIC, PENELOPE.
IT'S MUSIC.

TWEET-TWEET

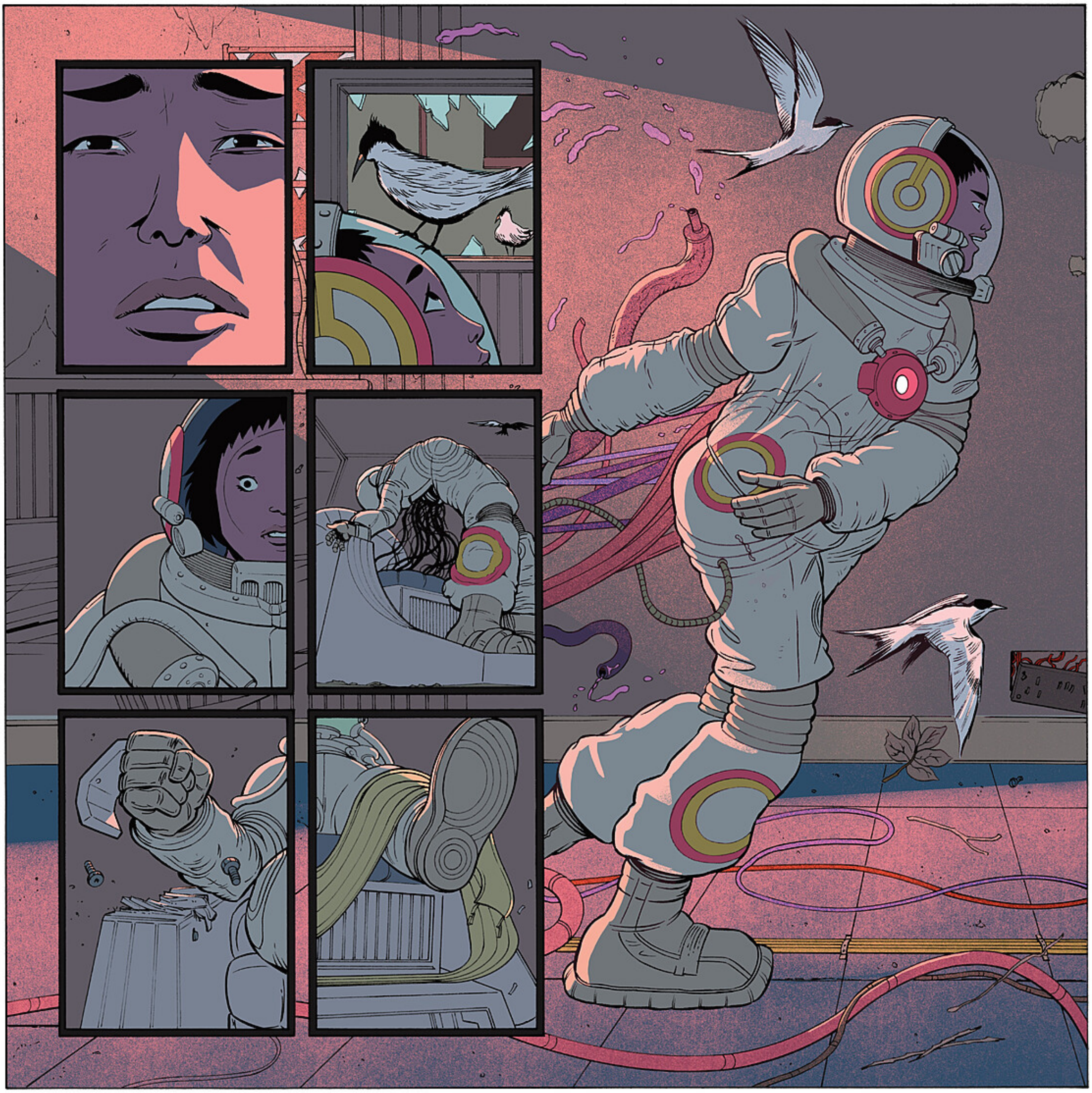
TUBE
TUBE

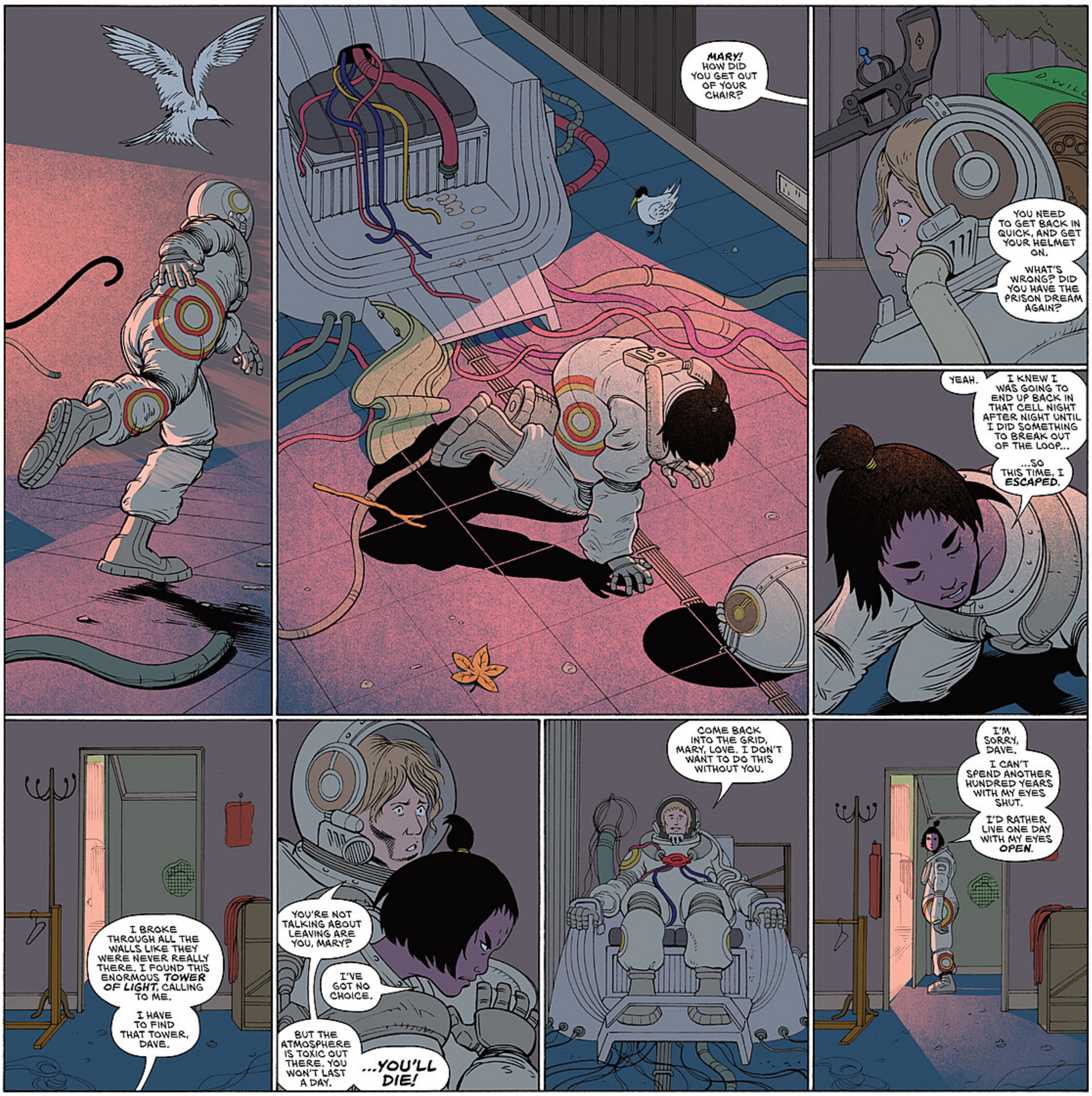


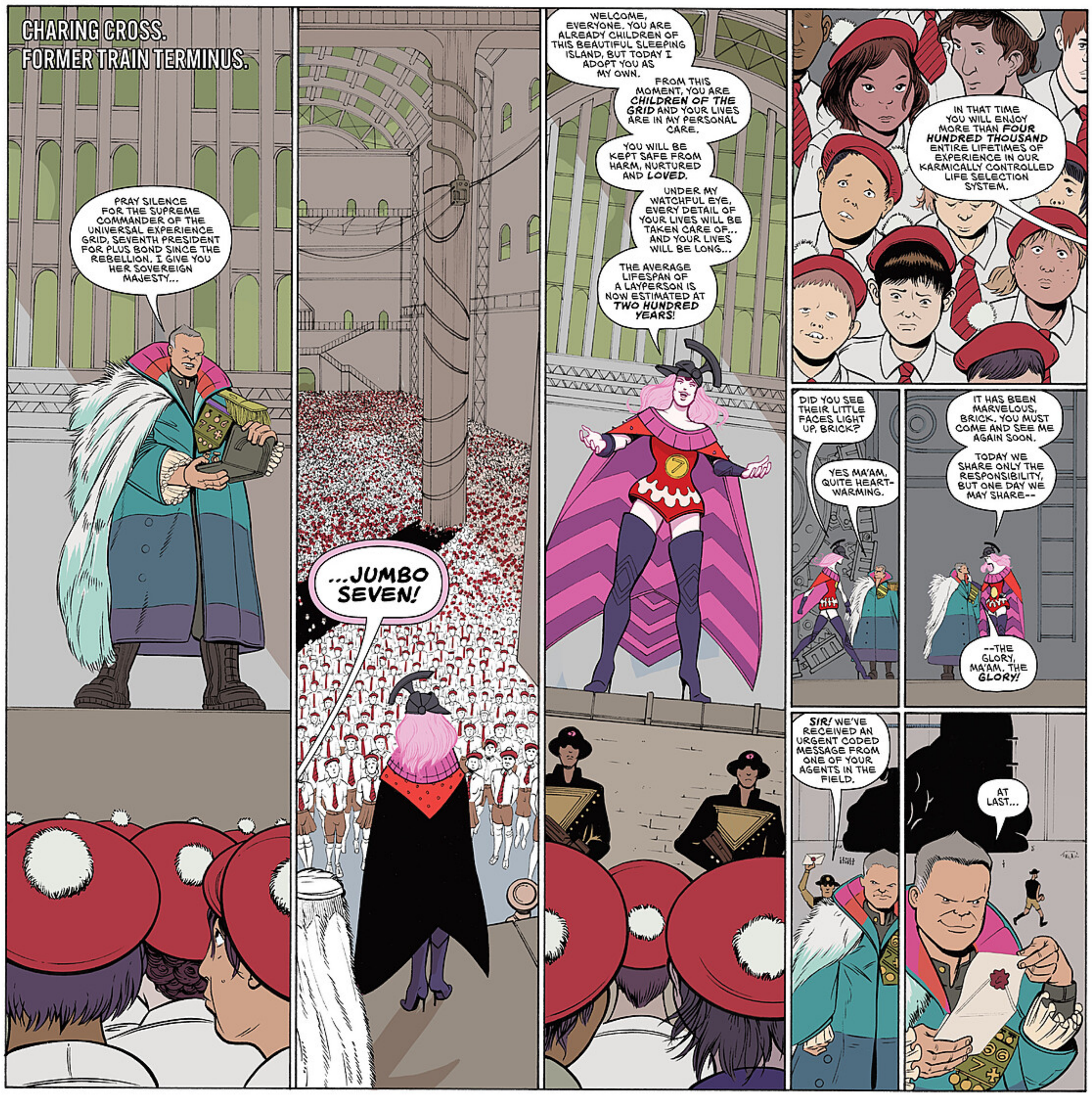


TWEEEEET
YOU KNOW I HATE COMING HERE, BRICK. ALL THESE EMPTY SUITS LOOK LIKE CORPSES.
IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT YOU INSPECT THEM TODAY MA'AM, OR WE'LL NEVER HAVE THEM READY FOR THE NEW RECRUITS.
AWWWWK
WHAT DO THE TECHNICIANS HAVE TO SAY?
THE USUAL BELLYACHING. THEY THINK THAT HAVING THE INITIATES LIVE TWO LIVES PER NIGHT WILL PUSH THE KARMIC READINGS TO THE EXTREMES.
TWEET
MAYBE IT WILL PUSH SOMEONE TO BECOME THE FIRST SILVER CHILD.

TWEEET-TWEEEET
HAVE TO ESCAPE...
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE RISKS? THERE ARE TOO MANY ORANGE LEVEL READINGS.
AND IF THEY DROP TO RED, IT MEANS KARMADEATH...
HAVE TO...
TWEEEET
...A NIGHTMARE THEY CAN NEVER WAKE FROM...
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
...WAKE UP!
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP

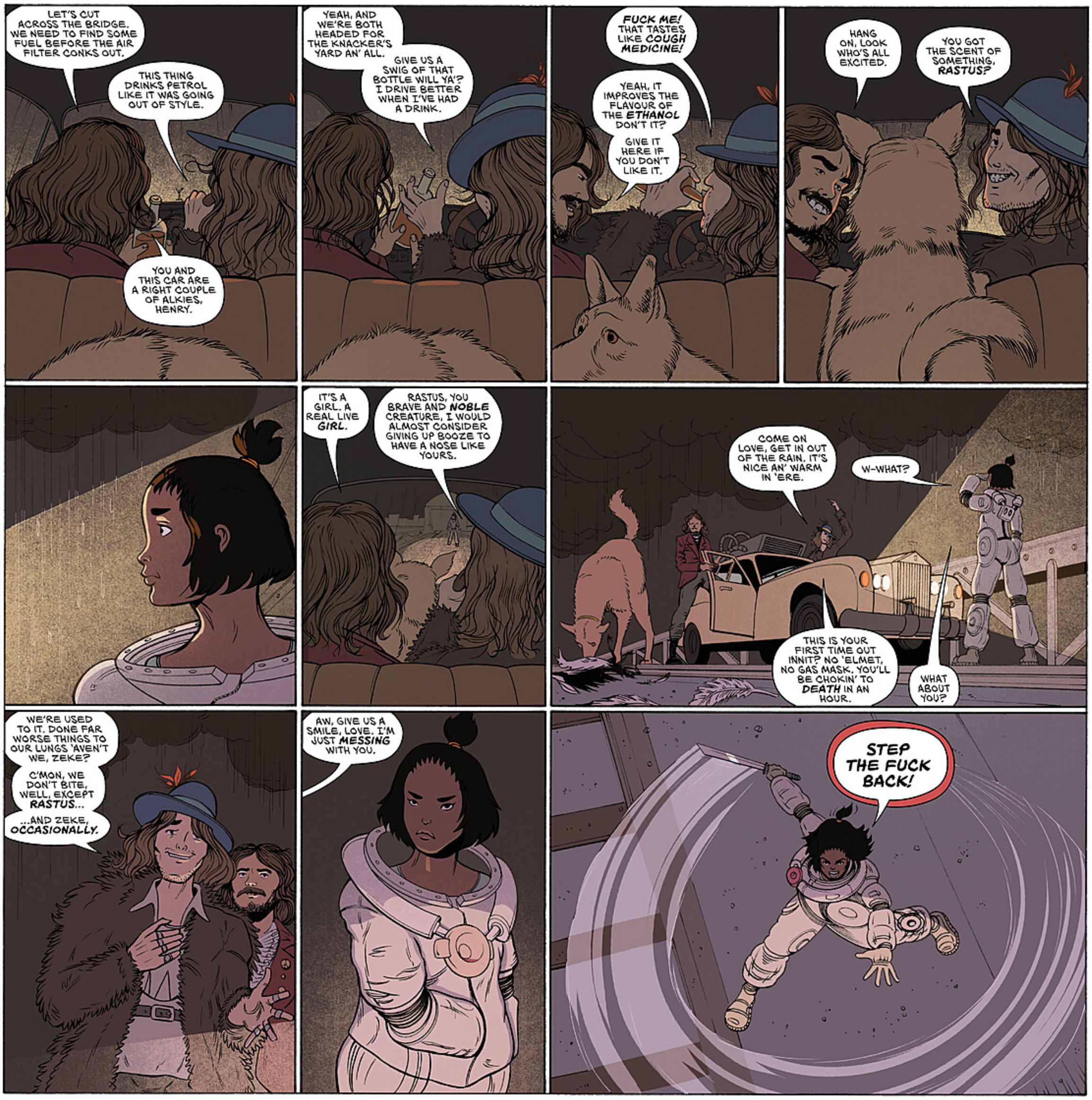


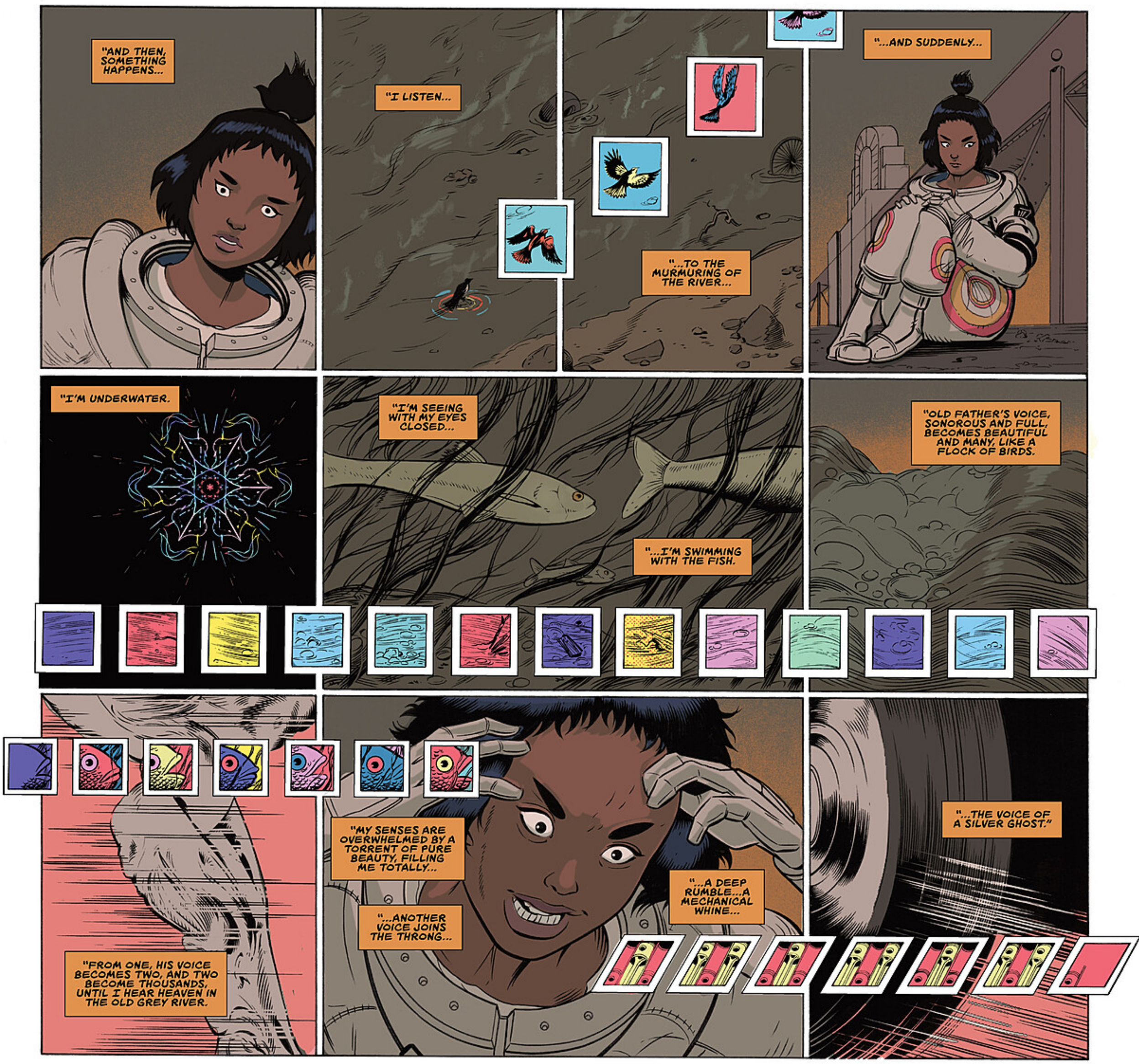

MARY! HOW DID YOU GET OUT OF YOUR CHAIR?
YOU NEED TO GET BACK IN QUICK, AND GET YOUR HELMET ON.
WHAT'S WRONG? DID YOU HAVE THE PRISON DREAM AGAIN?
YEAH.
I KNEW I WAS GOING TO END UP BACK IN THAT CELL NIGHT AFTER NIGHT UNTIL I DID SOMETHING TO BREAK OUT OF THE LOOP...
...SO THIS TIME, I ESCAPED.
I BROKE THROUGH ALL THE WALLS LIKE THEY WERE NEVER REALLY THERE. I FOUND THIS ENORMOUS TOWER OF LIGHT, CALLING TO ME.
I HAVE TO FIND THAT TOWER, DAVE.
YOU'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT LEAVING ARE YOU, MARY?
I'VE GOT NO CHOICE.
BUT THE ATMOSPHERE IS TOXIC OUT THERE. YOU WON'T LAST A DAY.
...YOU'LL DIE!
COME BACK INTO THE GRID, MARY, LOVE. I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS WITHOUT YOU.
I'M SORRY, DAVE.
I CAN'T SPEND ANOTHER HUNDRED YEARS WITH MY EYES SHUT.
I'D RATHER LIVE ONE DAY WITH MY EYES OPEN.

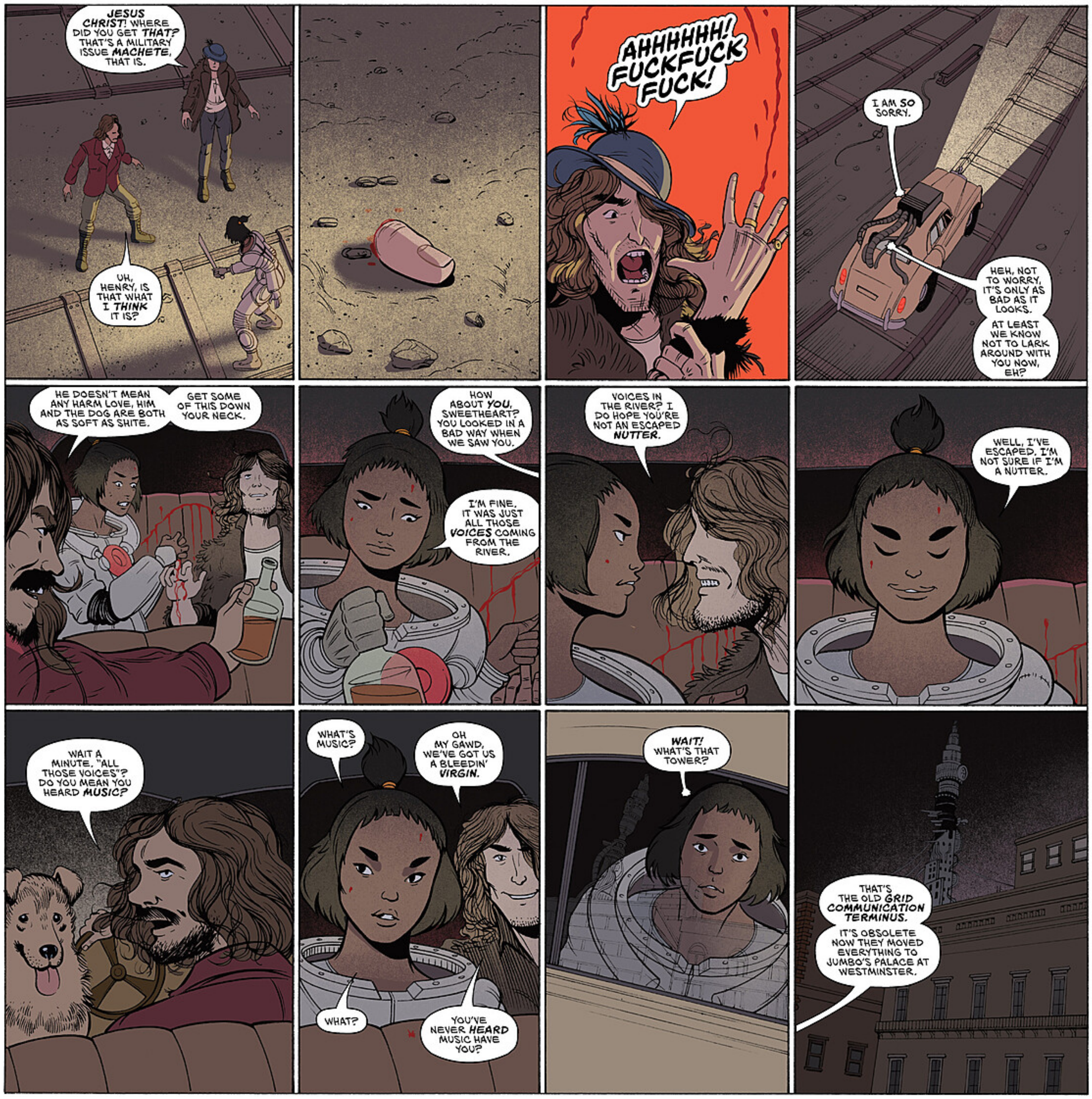

CHARING CROSS.
FORMER TRAIN TERMINUS.
PRAY SILENCE FOR THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE GRID, SEVENTH PRESIDENT FOR PLUS BOND SINCE THE REBELLION. I GIVE YOU HER SOVEREIGN MAJESTY...
...JUMBO SEVEN!
WELCOME, EVERYONE. YOU ARE ALREADY CHILDREN OF THIS BEAUTIFUL SLEEPING ISLAND, BUT TODAY I ADOPT YOU AS MY OWN.
FROM THIS MOMENT, YOU ARE CHILDREN OF THE GRID AND YOUR LIVES ARE IN MY PERSONAL CARE.
YOU WILL BE KEPT SAFE FROM HARM, NURTURED AND LOVED.
UNDER MY WATCHFUL EYE, EVERY DETAIL OF YOUR LIVES WILL BE TAKEN CARE OF... AND YOUR LIVES WILL BE LONG...
THE AVERAGE LIFESPAN OF A LAYPERSON IS NOW ESTIMATED AT TWO HUNDRED YEARS!
IN THAT TIME YOU WILL ENJOY MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND ENTIRE LIFETIMES OF EXPERIENCE IN OUR KARMICALLY CONTROLLED LIFE SELECTION SYSTEM.
DID YOU SEE THEIR LITTLE FACES LIGHT UP, BRICK?
YES MA'AM, QUITE HEART-WARMING.
IT HAS BEEN MARVELOUS, BRICK. YOU MUST COME AND SEE ME AGAIN SOON.
TODAY WE SHARE ONLY THE RESPONSIBILITY, BUT ONE DAY WE MAY SHARE--
--THE GLORY, MA'AM. THE GLORY!
SIR! WE'VE RECEIVED AN URGENT CODED MESSAGE FROM ONE OF YOUR AGENTS IN THE FIELD.
AT LAST...

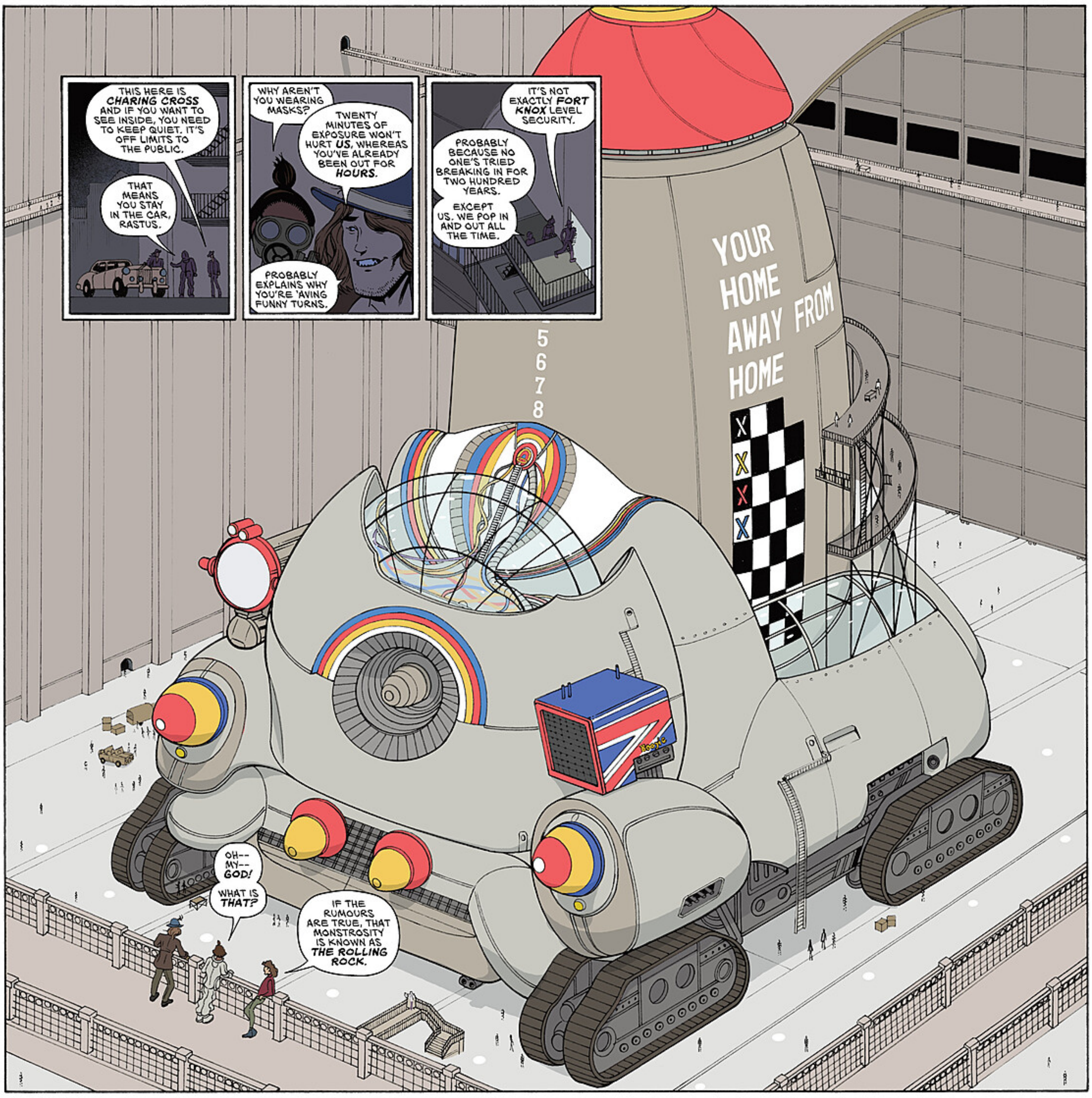
"ANOTHER NIGHT FALLS ACROSS THE SLEEPING ISLE AS THE MAGICAL ELIXIR PUMPS STEADILY THROUGH THE ARTERIES OF THE GRID...
"...THE ONE FEEDING THE MANY...
"...THE PEOPLE SLEEP AND DREAM...
"...SOME DREAM OF YOUTH AND BEAUTY...
"...WHILE THE DIGITAL STREAM FLOWS ON...
"...NO FEARS OF PAST OR FUTURE...
"...JUST A WARM, SECURE, ETERNAL PRESENT...
"...THE BUILDINGS DECAY BUT LIFE GOES ON...
PICTURE
"...SOME RELIVE MOMENTS OF VIOLENCE...
"...BUT THE FANTASY IS HARMLESS...THE REBELLION IS LONG OVER...
"...THERE IS PEACE ACROSS THE LAND."
MARY CROPPER!
WHERE THE BLOODY HELL IS SHE?

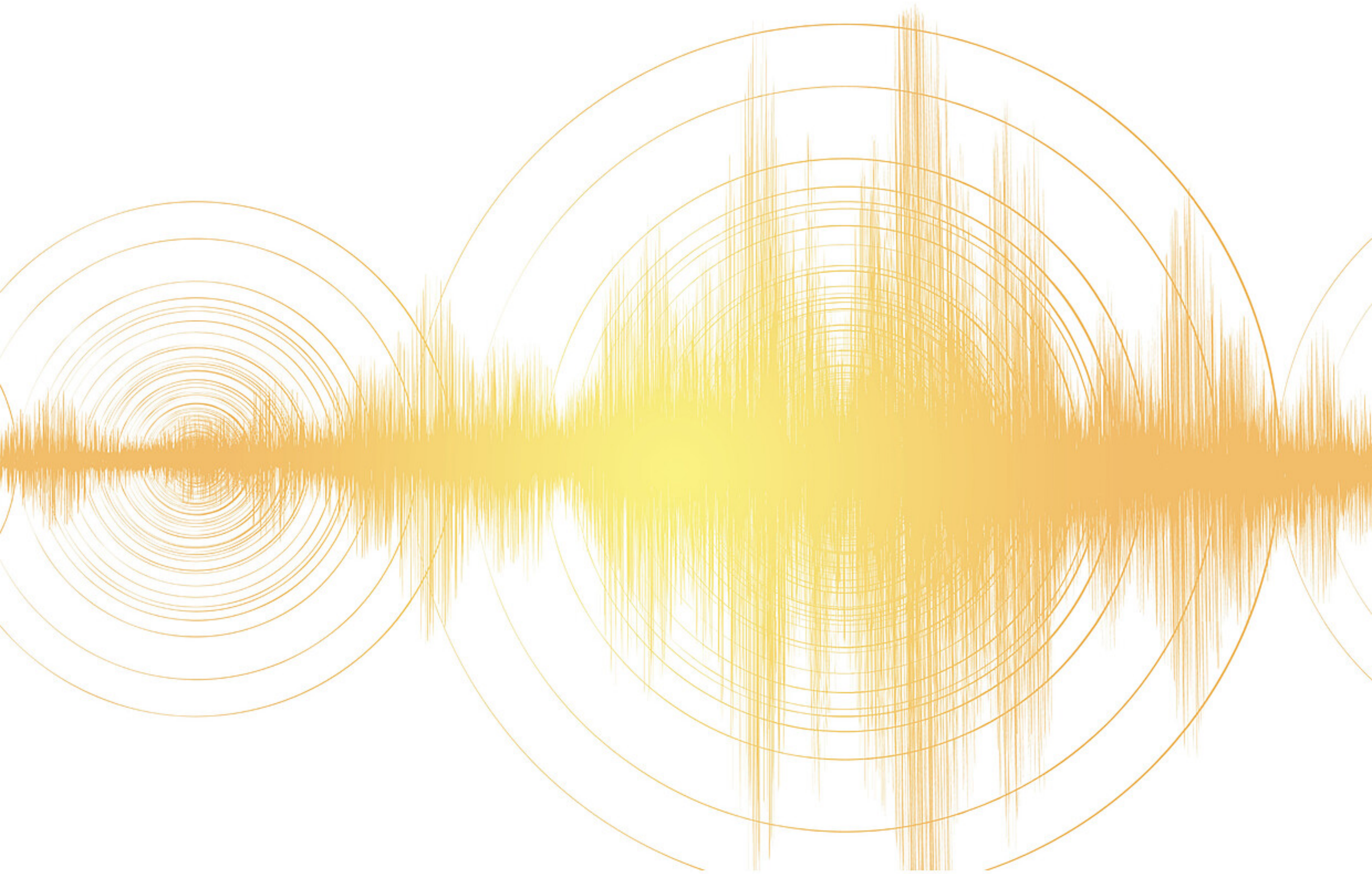
HUNGERFORD BRIDGE.
LONDON.
ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
HELLO AGAIN OLD FATHER THAMES. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
YOU HAVEN'T FARED TOO WELL, HAVE YOU?
TWO HUNDRED YEARS AND YOU SMELL WORSE THAN EVER.
CAN'T EVEN TAKE CARE OF THE STINK ON YOUR DOORSTEP, YOU USELESS BUGGERS...


LET'S CUT ACROSS THE BRIDGE. WE NEED TO FIND SOME FUEL BEFORE THE AIR FILTER CONKS OUT.
THIS THING DRINKS PETROL LIKE IT WAS GOING OUT OF STYLE.
YOU AND THIS CAR ARE A RIGHT COUPLE OF ALKIES, HENRY.
YEAH, AND WE'RE BOTH HEADED FOR THE KNACKER'S YARD AN' ALL.
GIVE US A SWIG OF THAT BOTTLE WILL YA'? I DRIVE BETTER WHEN I'VE HAD A DRINK.
FUCK ME! THAT TASTES LIKE COUGH MEDICINE!
YEAH, IT IMPROVES THE FLAVOUR OF THE ETHANOL DON'T IT?
GIVE IT HERE IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT.
HANG ON, LOOK WHO'S ALL EXCITED.
YOU GOT THE SCENT OF SOMETHING, RASTUS?
IT'S A GIRL. A REAL LIVE GIRL.
RASTUS, YOU BRAVE AND NOBLE CREATURE, I WOULD ALMOST CONSIDER GIVING UP BOOZE TO HAVE A NOSE LIKE YOURS.
COME ON LOVE, GET IN OUT OF THE RAIN. IT'S NICE AN' WARM IN 'ERE.
W-WHAT?
THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME OUT INNIT? NO 'ELMET, NO GAS MASK. YOU'LL BE CHOKIN' TO DEATH IN AN HOUR.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
WE'RE USED TO IT. DONE FAR WORSE THINGS TO OUR LUNGS 'AVEN'T WE, ZEKE?
C'MON, WE DON'T BITE, WELL, EXCEPT RASTUS...
...AND ZEKE, OCCASIONALLY.
AW, GIVE US A SMILE, LOVE. I'M JUST MESSING WITH YOU.
STEP THE FUCK BACK!

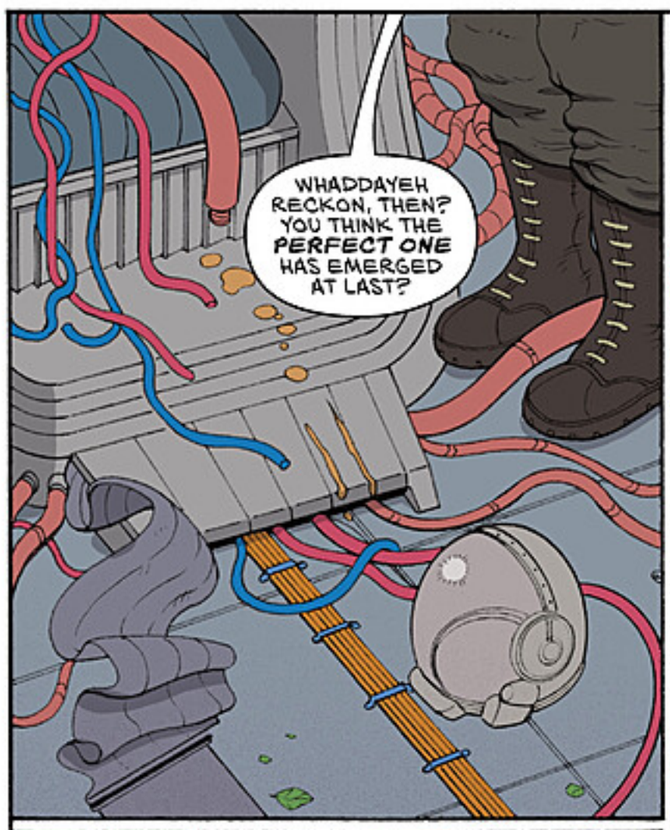

"AND THEN, SOMETHING HAPPENS...
"I LISTEN...
"...TO THE MURMURING OF THE RIVER...
"...AND SUDDENLY...
"I'M UNDERWATER.
"I'M SEEING WITH MY EYES CLOSED...
"...I'M SWIMMING WITH THE FISH.
"OLD FATHER'S VOICE, SONOROUS AND FULL, BECOMES BEAUTIFUL AND MANY, LIKE A FLOCK OF BIRDS.
"FROM ONE, HIS VOICE BECOMES TWO, AND TWO BECOME THOUSANDS, UNTIL I HEAR HEAVEN IN THE OLD GREY RIVER.
"MY SENSES ARE OVERWHELMED BY A TORRENT OF PURE BEAUTY, FILLING ME TOTALLY...
"...ANOTHER VOICE JOINS THE THRONG...
"...A DEEP RUMBLE...A MECHANICAL WHINE...
"...THE VOICE OF A SILVER GHOST."


JESUS CHRIST! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT? THAT'S A MILITARY ISSUE MACHETE, THAT IS.
UH, HENRY, IS THAT WHAT I THINK IT IS?
AHHHHHH! FUCKFUCK FUCK!
I AM SO SORRY.
HEH, NOT TO WORRY, IT'S ONLY AS BAD AS IT LOOKS.
AT LEAST WE KNOW NOT TO LARK AROUND WITH YOU NOW, EH?
HE DOESN'T MEAN ANY HARM LOVE, HIM AND THE DOG ARE BOTH AS SOFT AS SHITE.
GET SOME OF THIS DOWN YOUR NECK.
HOW ABOUT YOU, SWEETHEART? YOU LOOKED IN A BAD WAY WHEN WE SAW YOU.
I'M FINE. IT WAS JUST ALL THOSE VOICES COMING FROM THE RIVER.
VOICES IN THE RIVER? I DO HOPE YOU'RE NOT AN ESCAPED NUTTER.
WELL, I'VE ESCAPED. I'M NOT SURE IF I'M A NUTTER.
WAIT A MINUTE, "ALL THOSE VOICES"? DO YOU MEAN YOU HEARD MUSIC?
WHAT'S MUSIC?
OH MY GAWD, WE'VE GOT US A BLEEDIN' VIRGIN.
WHAT?
YOU'VE NEVER HEARD MUSIC HAVE YOU?
WAIT! WHAT'S THAT TOWER?
THAT'S THE OLD GRID COMMUNICATION TERMINUS.
IT'S OBSOLETE NOW THEY MOVED EVERYTHING TO JUMBO'S PALACE AT WESTMINSTER.


THIS HERE IS CHARING CROSS AND IF YOU WANT TO SEE INSIDE, YOU NEED TO KEEP QUIET. IT'S OFF LIMITS TO THE PUBLIC.
THAT MEANS YOU STAY IN THE CAR, RASTUS.
WHY AREN'T YOU WEARING MASKS?
TWENTY MINUTES OF EXPOSURE WON'T HURT US, WHEREAS YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN OUT FOR HOURS.
PROBABLY EXPLAINS WHY YOU'RE 'AVING FUNNY TURNS.
IT'S NOT EXACTLY FORT KNOX LEVEL SECURITY.
PROBABLY BECAUSE NO ONE'S TRIED BREAKING IN FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS.
EXCEPT US. WE POP IN AND OUT ALL THE TIME.
5
6
7
8
YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME
X
X
X
X
OH-- MY-- GOD!
WHAT IS THAT?
IF THE RUMOURS ARE TRUE, THAT MONSTROSITY IS KNOWN AS THE ROLLING ROCK.



CHAPTER TWO


WHADDAYEH RECKON, THEN? YOU THINK THE PERFECT ONE HAS EMERGED AT LAST?

WELL, JESUS WAS BORN IN A BARN. I S'POSE ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE.
THIS MUST BE HER. SHE DOES LOOK A BIT SPECIAL.

LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE RIGHT, CHIEF. I'VE RUN A DIAGNOSTIC AND THE SUBJECTS'S EJECTION FROM THE SEAT WAS TRIGGERED BY A SIGNAL FROM CENTRAL LONDON.
SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD TO PINPOINT THE EXACT LOCATION.
GOOD WORK, NUMBER FOUR.

THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WHO COULD HACK THE SYSTEM LIKE THIS.
BOBOK MUST BE ALIVE AND THIS SIGNAL COULD LEAD US STRAIGHT TO HIM.
GOOD GOD, YOU'RE A GENIUS!
RIGHT-- EXECUTE PLAN NINE.
ER... WHAT'S PLAN NINE?

BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!

YOU MAY BE A GENIUS, BUT YOU'RE STILL A DAFT TWAT.

DO EITHER OF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH WHAT JUST HAPPENED TO NUMBER FOUR?
THE RIGHT TO LIFE IS AUTOMATICALLY WAIVED ON ENTERING A COMBAT ZONE, SIR.

CORRECT! AND YOU LOVE JUMBO AND WOULD FOLLOW ANY ORDER FROM HER UNCONDITIONALLY.
MY WILL IS THE WILL OF JUMBO. THAT'S WHY THEY MAKE ME WEAR THIS STUPID HAT.
YES, BOSS.

IS THAT A SMIRK? ARE YOU MOCKING ME, HACKETT?
NO, BOSS, I JUST--

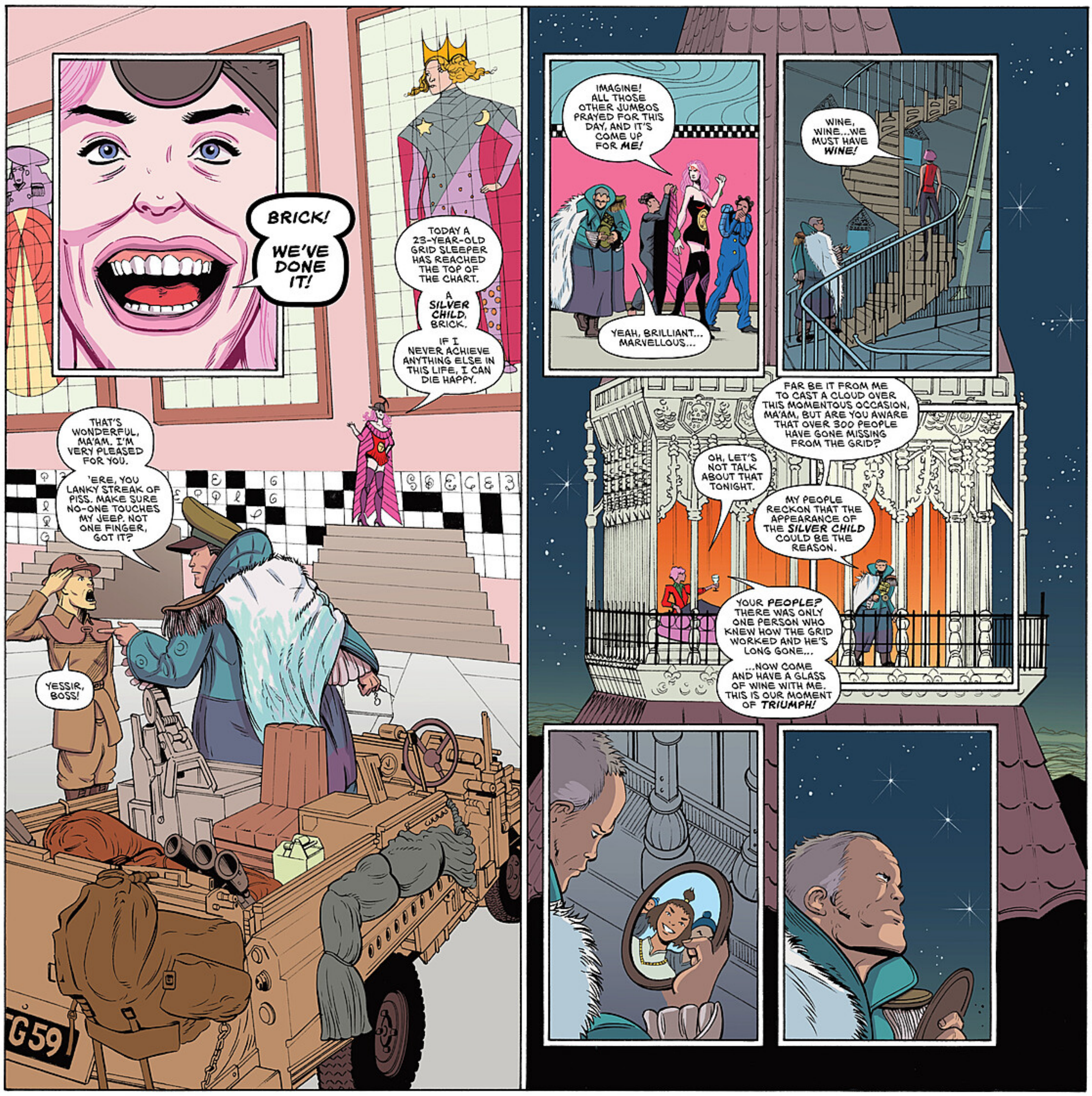
RIGHT, PRIVATE CARTWRIGHT, EXECUTE PRIVATE HACKETT FOR INSUBORDINATION.

WELL, CARTWRIGHT, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
I--I CAN'T DO IT, SIR.

REFUSAL TO OBEY DIRECT ORDERS IS A COURT MARTIAL OFFENCE. PRIVATE HACKETT, EXECUTE PRIVATE CARTWRIGHT.
BUT SIR, IF I SHOOT HER, SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO CARRY OUT HER ORDERS TO SHOOT ME.

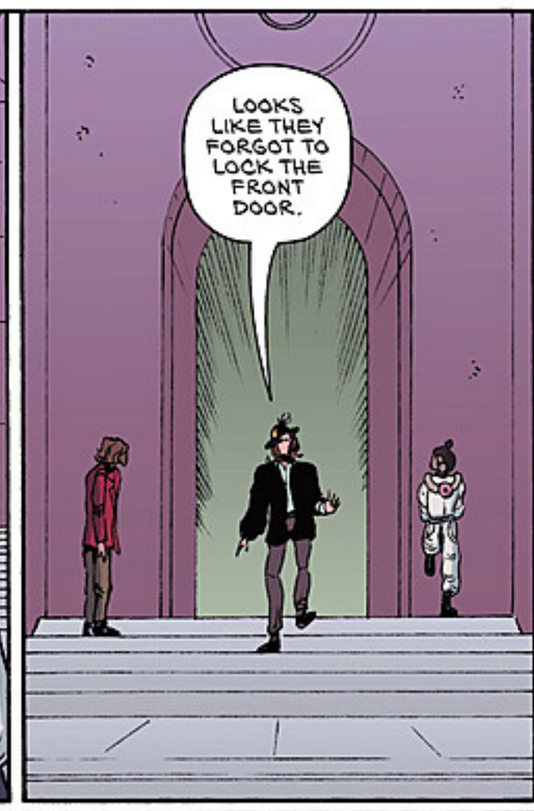
CORRECT AGAIN. BUT YOU ARE BOTH DISOBEYING A DIRECT ORDER FROM YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER.
THE ONLY SOLUTION I CAN SEE IS FOR YOU BOTH TO SHOOT YOURSELVES IN THE HEAD.
ON THE DOUBLE NOW!
THIS IS A BRAVE AND NOBLE THING YOU ARE DOING, PRIVATES. I'LL SEE YOU GET A COMMENDATION.
BLAM! BLAM!
OI! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE WRIGGLING OFF TO, SOFT LAD?
RIGHT THEN, DAVE IS IT? YOU CAN FILL ME IN ON EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED BEFORE WE GOT HERE.
I'M SURE YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO COOPERATE, WON'T YOU?
MMRRRRGGGHH...
STAFFORD PICTURE HOUSE, COMMUNAL SLEEP CENTRE.
COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO ARE TROUBLED AND YEARNING TO BE FREE.
MY BLOOD SHALL COMFORT YOU.
AND IN ME YOU WILL FIND NEW LIFE AND NEW HOPE.

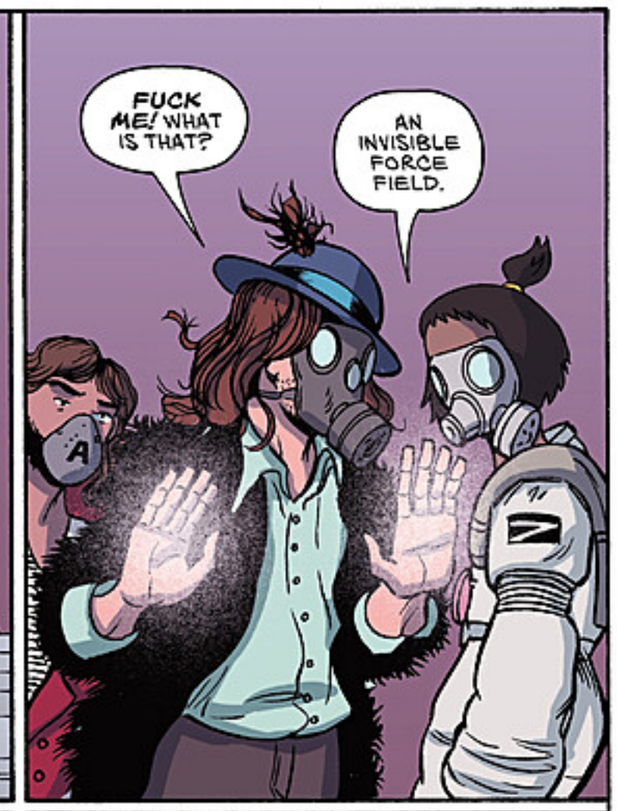
CHARING CROSS STATION.
SO WHAT IS THIS ROLLING ROCK?
NOT A CLUE, MARY, BUT THEY'RE LOADING SUPPLIES SO I S'POSE IT MUST BE FINISHED.
JUST KEEP THE PLASTIC TIGHT OVER THE GAUZE. TOO BAD WE HAVEN'T GOT ANY ICE.
S'ALRIGHT, HE'S STILL HALF-CUT. HE CAN'T FEEL A THING.
HOW'D YOU KNOW HOW TO FIX HIS FINGER?
I MUST HAVE LEARNED IT IN GRIDSLEEP.
THAT'S JUST DREAMS. YOU CAN'T LEARN ANYTHING NEW IN A DREAM.
IT SEEMS LIKE REAL LIFE AND YOU LIVE FOR YEARS EVERY NIGHT, BUT WHEN YOU WAKE UP IT'S ONLY BEEN 18 HOURS.
THEN YOU LIE AWAKE FOR A FEW HOURS BEFORE YOU GO BACK UNDER.
THAT'S NOT A DREAM, THAT'S A BLOODY NIGHTMARE.
I WISH EVERYONE COULD WAKE UP FROM IT.
STICK WITH US. WE'LL TEACH YOU STUFF YOU'LL NEVER LEARN ON THE GRID.
F'RINSTANCE, TONIGHT RASTUS IS GOING TO SCENT OUT ROTTEN WOOD. I HAVE IT ON GOOD AUTHORITY YOU CAN USE IT TO MAKE BATHTUB GIN.
OR...MAYBE WE COULD CHECK OUT THAT TOWER WE SAW EARLIER?
OKAY, I'M UP FOR THAT.
WOT, SOME SKIRT SHOWS UP AND SUDDENLY WE'RE FOLLOWING 'ER TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH?
IT'S NOT THAT FAR, AND I RECKON IF YOU PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT, YOU COULD BE IN THERE.
OKAY, WHY NOT? THAT ROTTEN WOOD WILL WAIT FOR US.
THANKS. I JUST HAVE THIS FEELING LIKE SOMEONE IMPORTANT IS WAITING FOR ME THERE...
...BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO.


BRICK!
WE'VE DONE IT!
TODAY A 23-YEAR-OLD GRID SLEEPER HAS REACHED THE TOP OF THE CHART.
A SILVER CHILD, BRICK.
IF I NEVER ACHIEVE ANYTHING ELSE IN THIS LIFE, I CAN DIE HAPPY.
THAT'S WONDERFUL, MA'AM. I'M VERY PLEASED FOR YOU.
'ERE, YOU LANKY STREAK OF PISS. MAKE SURE NO-ONE TOUCHES MY JEEP. NOT ONE FINGER, GOT IT?
YESSIR, BOSS!
G59
IMAGINE! ALL THOSE OTHER JUMBOS PRAYED FOR THIS DAY, AND IT'S COME UP FOR ME!
YEAH, BRILLIANT... MARVELLOUS...
WINE, WINE...WE MUST HAVE WINE!
FAR BE IT FROM ME TO CAST A CLOUD OVER THIS MOMENTOUS OCCASION, MA'AM, BUT ARE YOU AWARE THAT OVER 300 PEOPLE HAVE GONE MISSING FROM THE GRID?
OH, LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT THAT TONIGHT.
MY PEOPLE RECKON THAT THE APPEARANCE OF THE SILVER CHILD COULD BE THE REASON.
YOUR PEOPLE? THERE WAS ONLY ONE PERSON WHO KNEW HOW THE GRID WORKED AND HE'S LONG GONE...
...NOW COME AND HAVE A GLASS OF WINE WITH ME. THIS IS OUR MOMENT OF TRIUMPH!

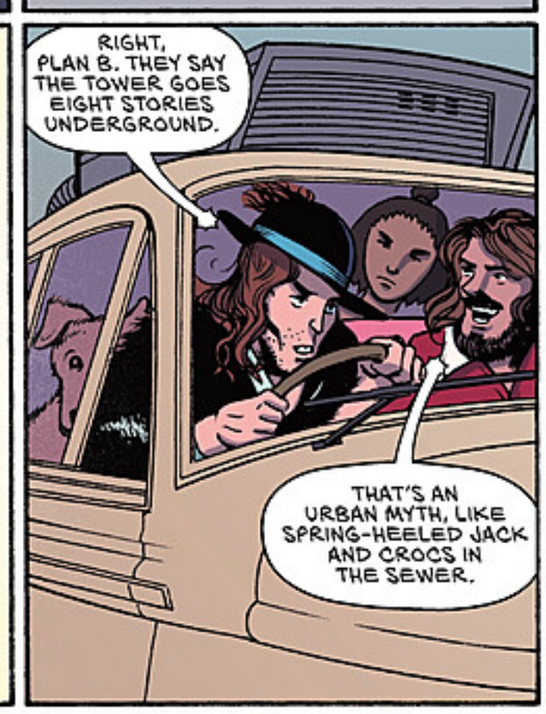
THE FORMER GRID COMMUNICATION TOWER.
YOU FIND ANYTHING?
SEALED OFF ALL ROUND.

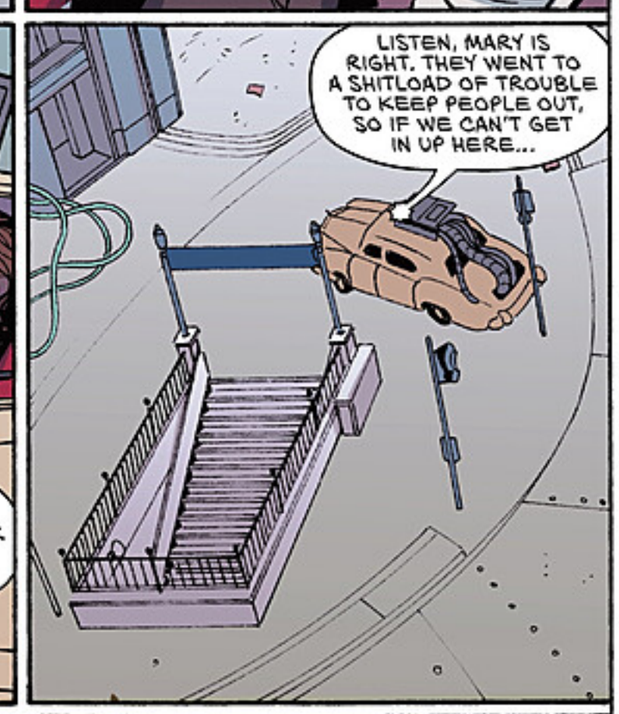
COME HERE AND CHECK THIS OUT.
THEY'RE HIDING SOMETHING IN HERE AND I WANT IN.

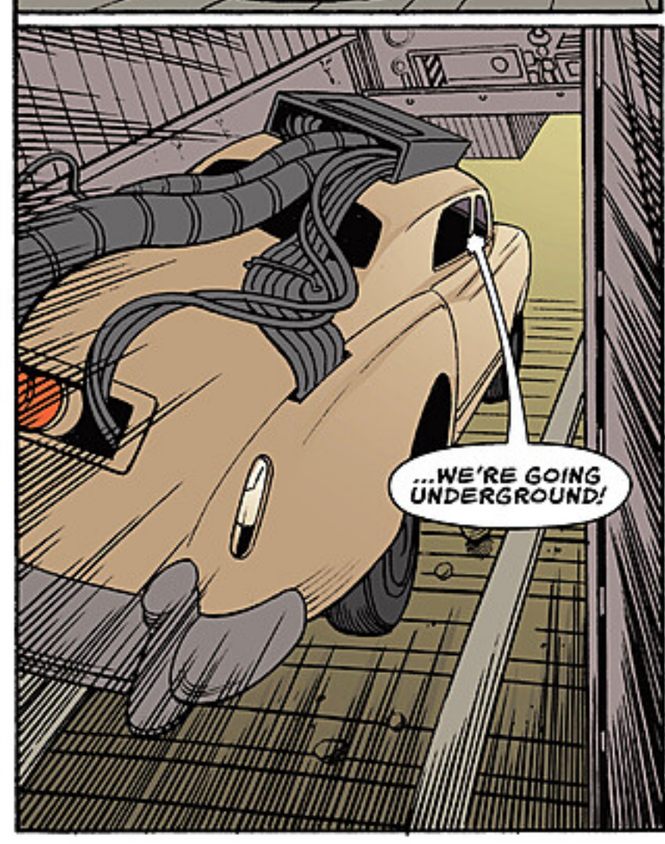

LOOKS LIKE THEY FORGOT TO LOCK THE FRONT DOOR.

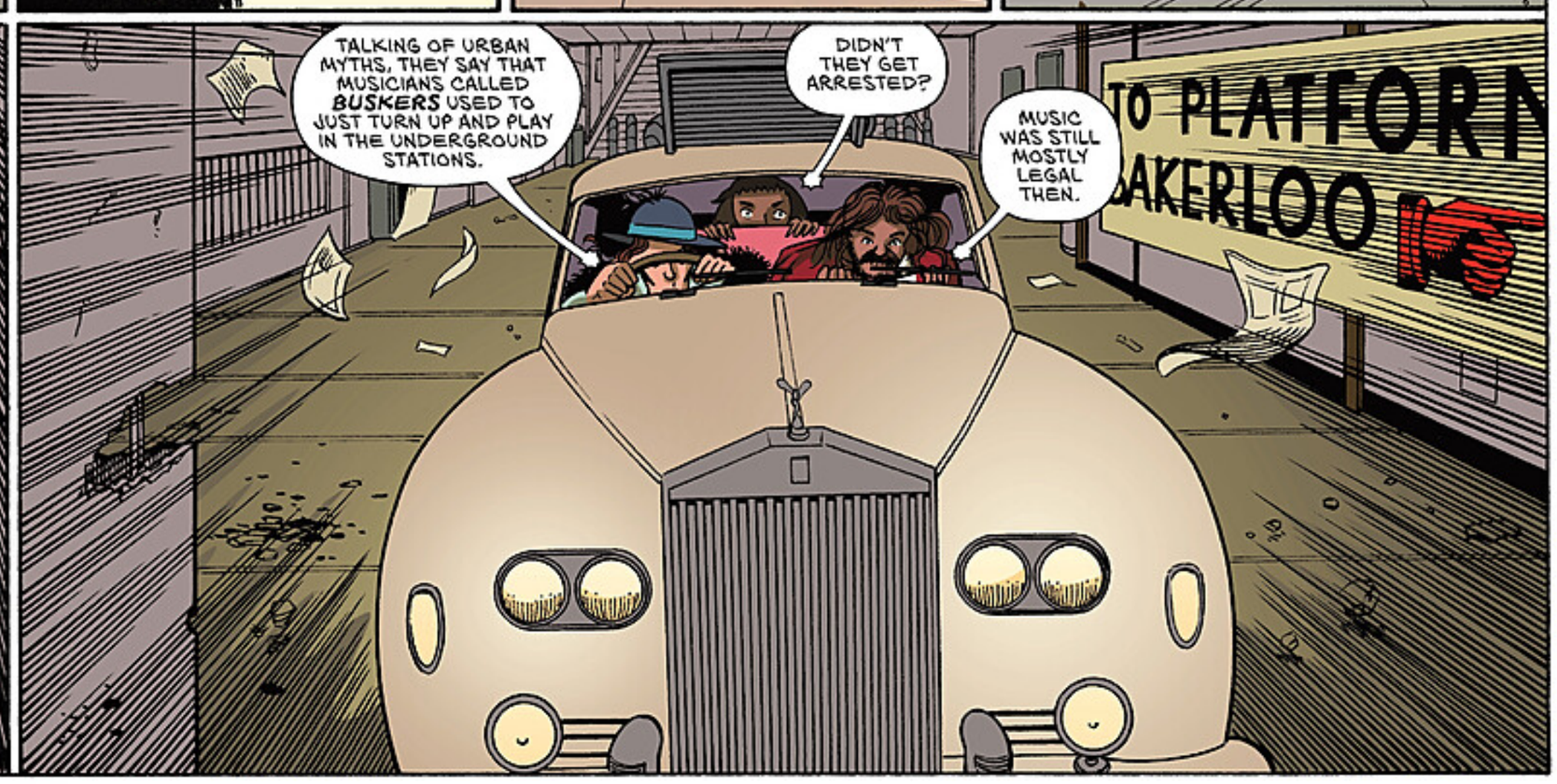

FUCK ME! WHAT IS THAT?
AN INVISIBLE FORCE FIELD.

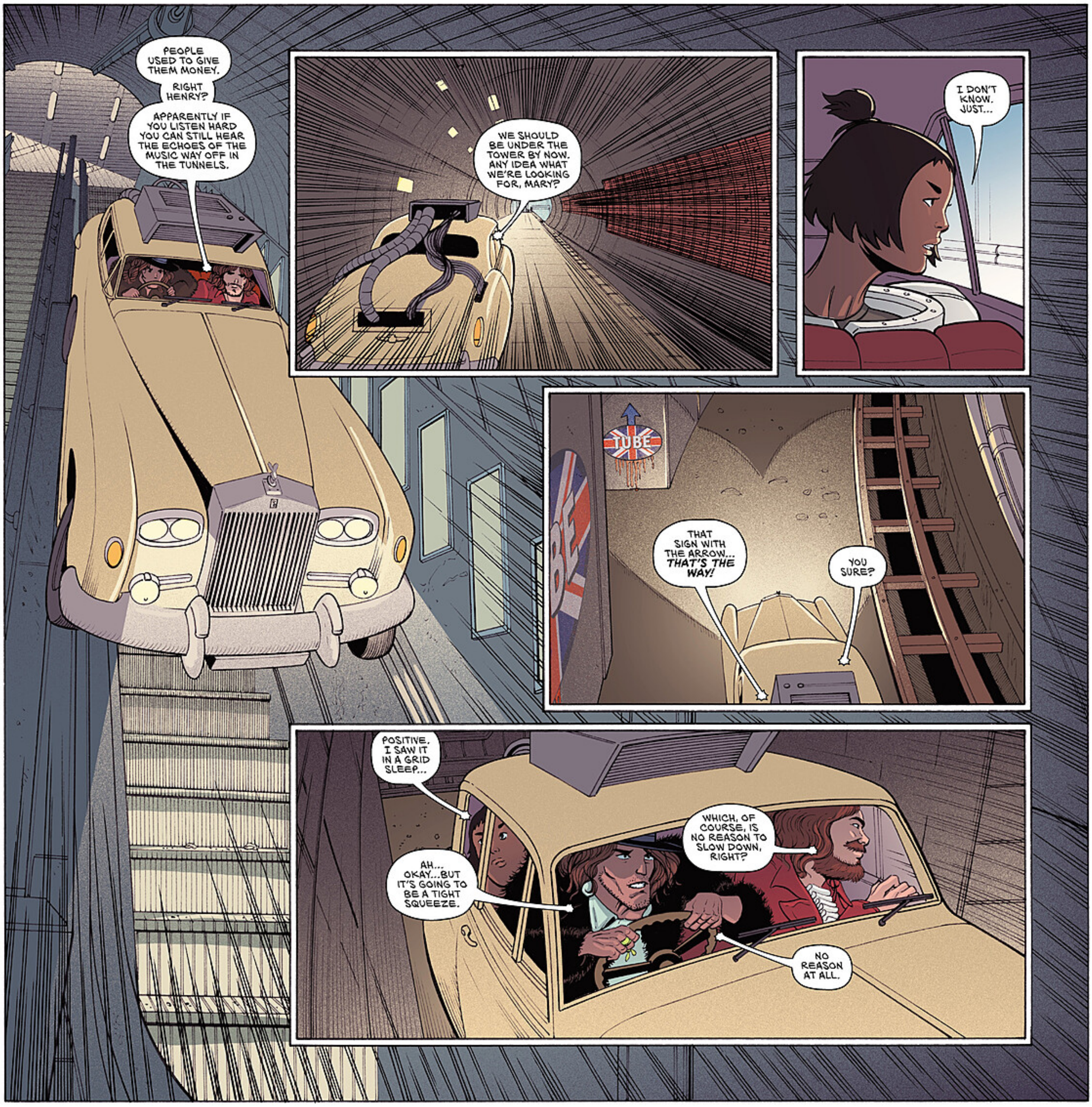
CHRIST! IT'S LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF DAN DARE!

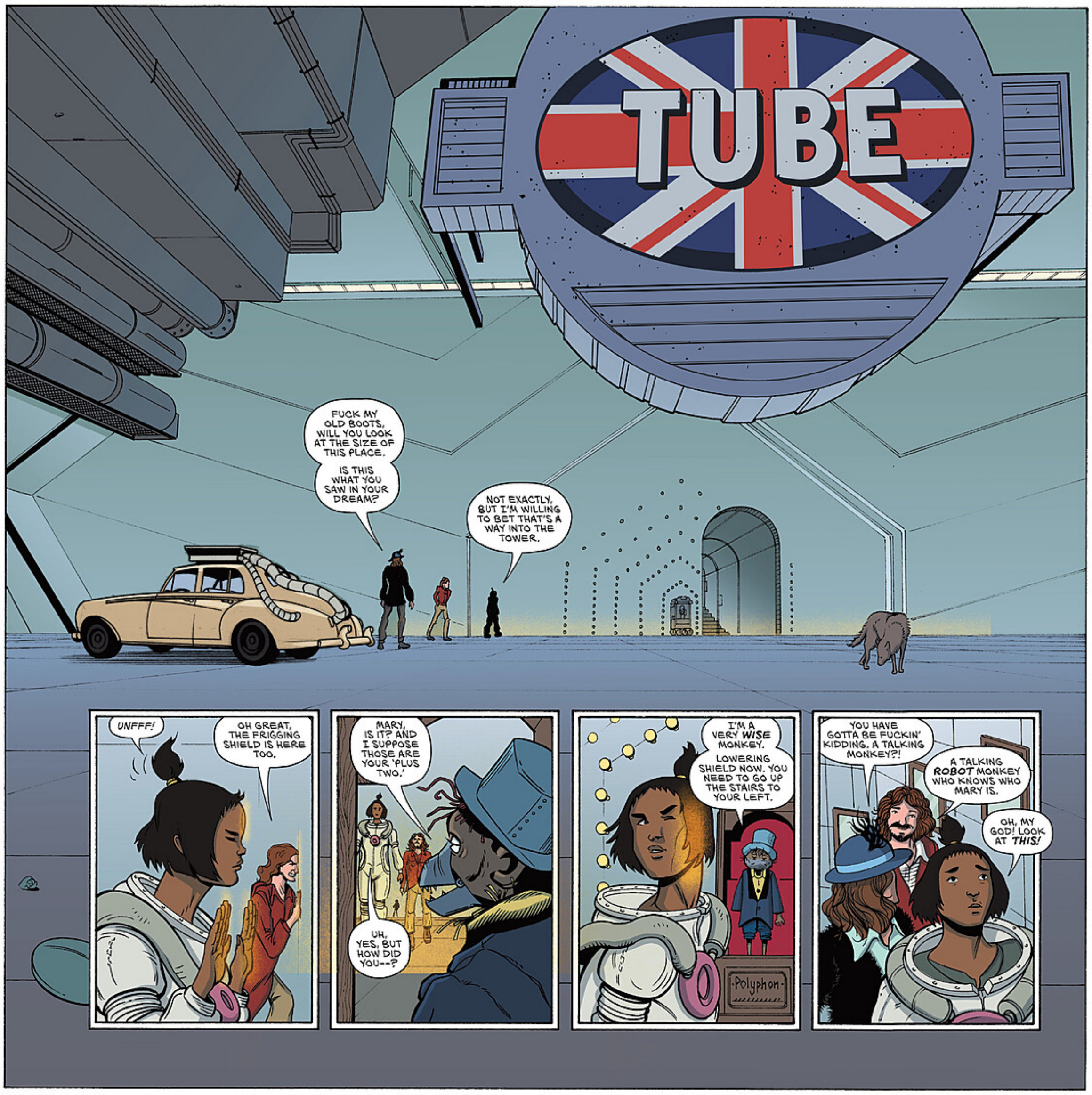

RIGHT, PLAN B. THEY SAY THE TOWER GOES EIGHT STORIES UNDERGROUND.
THAT'S AN URBAN MYTH, LIKE SPRING-HEELED JACK AND CROCS IN THE SEWER.

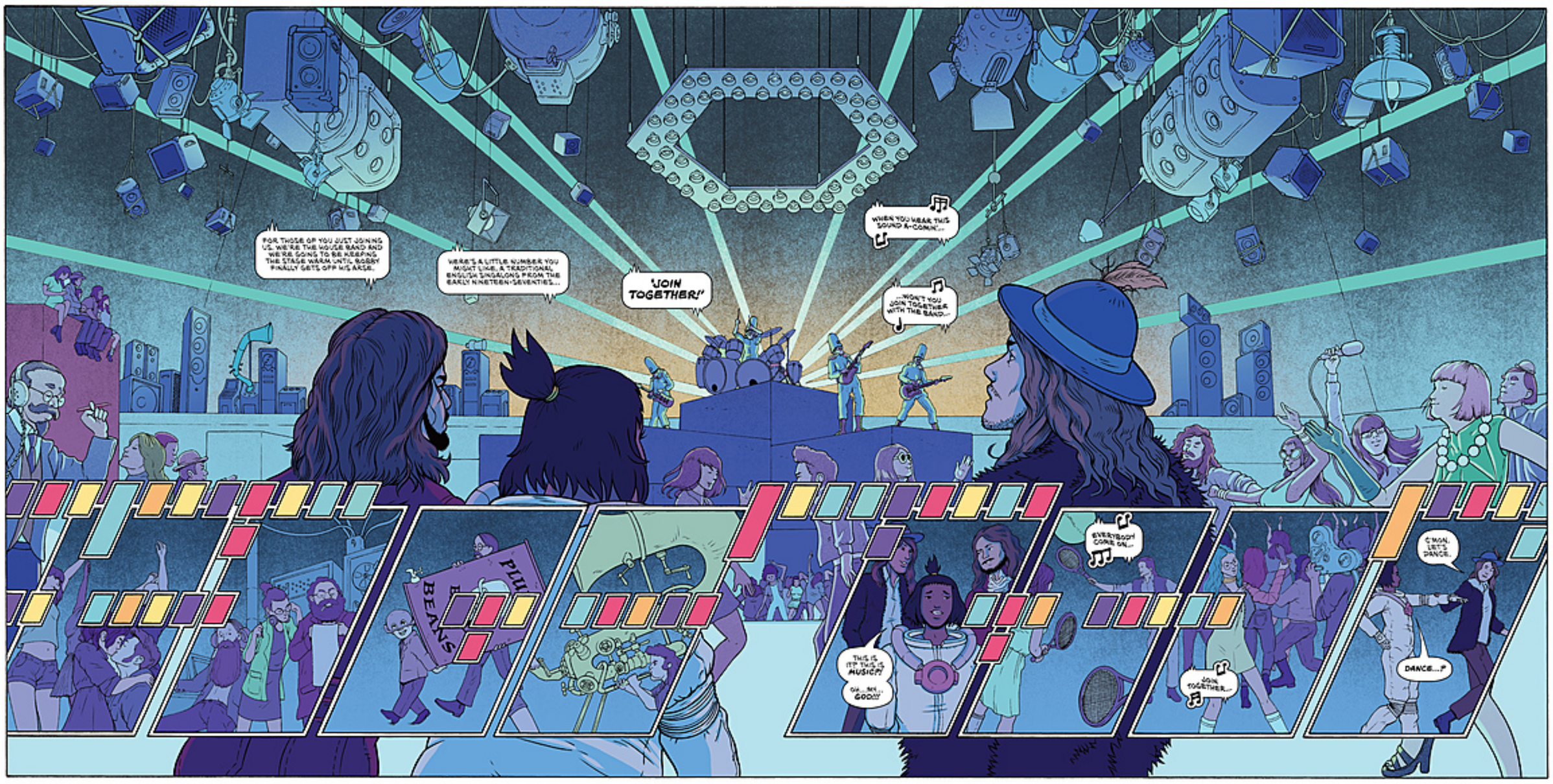

LISTEN, MARY IS RIGHT. THEY WENT TO A SHITLOAD OF TROUBLE TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT, SO IF WE CAN'T GET IN UP HERE...

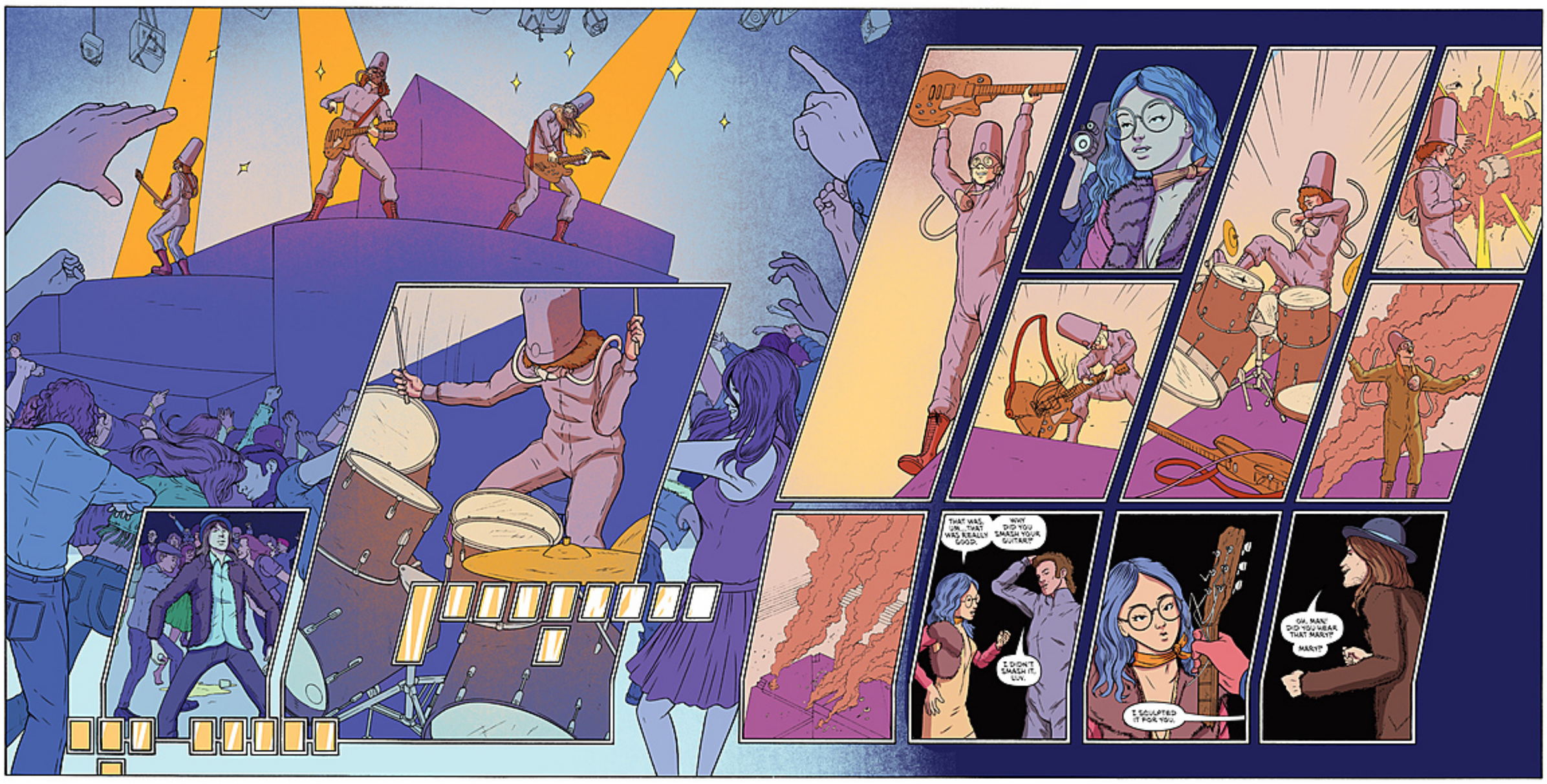

...WE'RE GOING UNDERGROUND!


TALKING OF URBAN MYTHS, THEY SAY THAT MUSICIANS CALLED BUSKERS USED TO JUST TURN UP AND PLAY IN THE UNDERGROUND STATIONS.
DIDN'T THEY GET ARRESTED?
MUSIC WAS STILL MOSTLY LEGAL THEN.
TO PLATFORM
BAKERLOO


PEOPLE USED TO GIVE THEM MONEY.
RIGHT HENRY?
APPARENTLY IF YOU LISTEN HARD YOU CAN STILL HEAR THE ECHOES OF THE MUSIC WAY OFF IN THE TUNNELS.
WE SHOULD BE UNDER THE TOWER BY NOW. ANY IDEA WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR, MARY?
I DON'T KNOW. JUST...
TUBE
THAT SIGN WITH THE ARROW... THAT'S THE WAY!
YOU SURE?
POSITIVE. I SAW IT IN A GRID SLEEP...
AH... OKAY...BUT IT'S GOING TO BE A TIGHT SQUEEZE.
WHICH, OF COURSE, IS NO REASON TO SLOW DOWN, RIGHT?
NO REASON AT ALL.


TUBE
FUCK MY OLD BOOTS, WILL YOU LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS PLACE.
IS THIS WHAT YOU SAW IN YOUR DREAM?
NOT EXACTLY, BUT I'M WILLING TO BET THAT'S A WAY INTO THE TOWER.
UNFFF!
OH GREAT, THE FRIGGING SHIELD IS HERE TOO.
MARY, IS IT? AND I SUPPOSE THOSE ARE YOUR 'PLUS TWO.'
UH, YES, BUT HOW DID YOU--?
I'M A VERY WISE MONKEY.
LOWERING SHIELD NOW. YOU NEED TO GO UP THE STAIRS TO YOUR LEFT.
Polyphon
YOU HAVE GOTTA BE FUCKIN' KIDDING. A TALKING MONKEY?!
A TALKING ROBOT MONKEY WHO KNOWS WHO MARY IS.
OH, MY GOD! LOOK AT THIS!

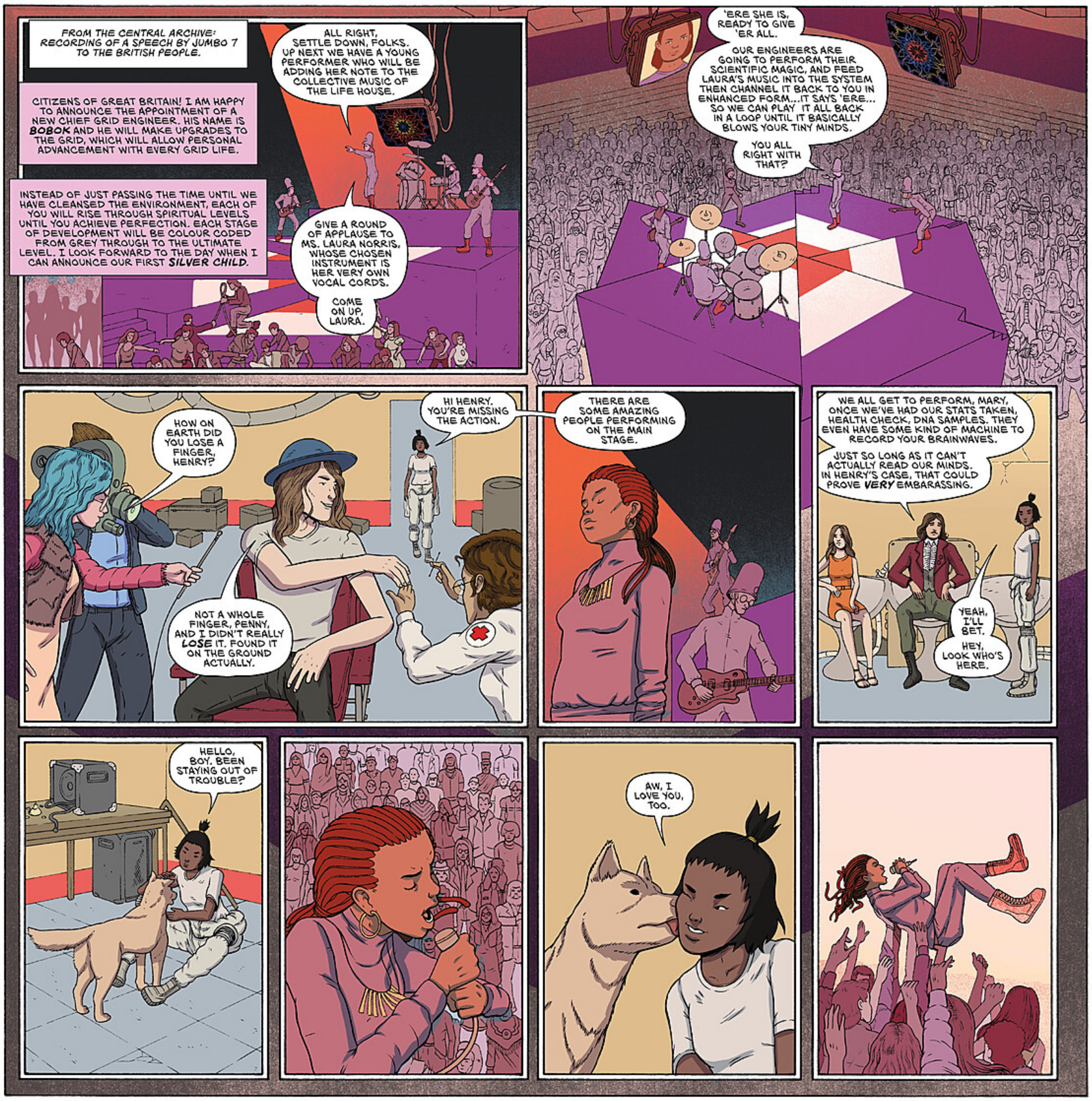

FOR THOSE OF YOU JUST JOINING US, WE'RE THE HOUSE BAND AND WE'RE GOING TO BE KEEPING THE STAGE WARM UNTIL BOBBY FINALLY GETS OFF HIS ARSE.
HERE'S A LITTLE NUMBER YOU MIGHT LIKE, A TRADITIONAL ENGLISH SINGALONG FROM THE EARLY NINETEEN-SEVENTIES...
"JOIN TOGETHER!"
WHEN YOU HEAR THIS SOUND A-COMIN'...
...WON'T YOU JOIN TOGETHER WITH THE BAND...
BEANS
THIS IS IT! THIS IS MUSIC?!
OH... MY... GOD!!!
EVERYBODY COME ON...
JOIN TOGETHER...
C'MON, LET'S DANCE.
DANCE...?


THAT WAS, UM...THAT WAS REALLY GOOD.
WHY DID YOU SMASH YOUR GUITAR?
I DIDN'T SMASH IT, LUV.
I SCULPTED IT FOR YOU.
OH, MAN! DID YOU WEAR THAT MARY?
MARY?

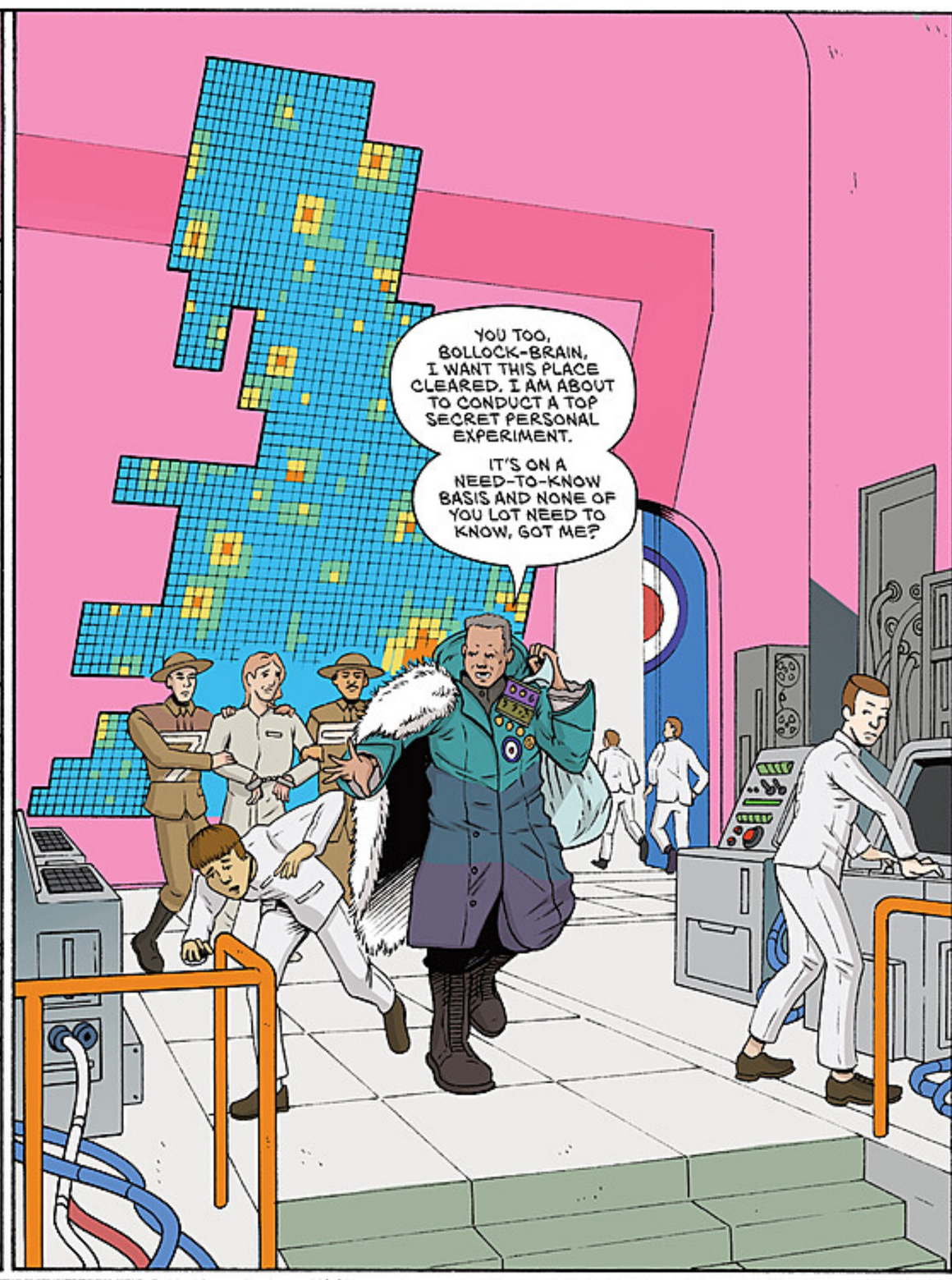
SO LOUD.
I CAN STILL HEAR IT, LIKE A RINGING IN MY HEAD.
WHERE AM I ANYWAY?
UNNHH. THIS IS NOT GOOD.

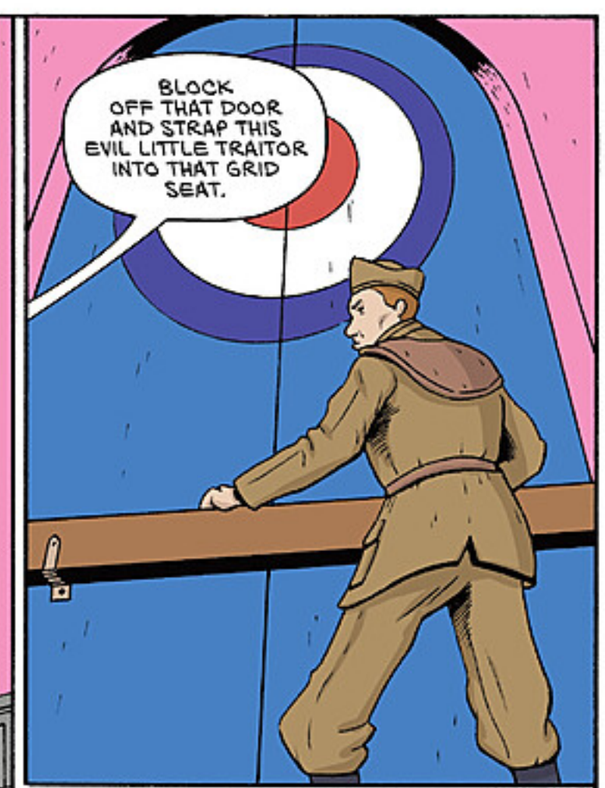
HI. AH, SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO TRESPASS OR ANYTHING.
I WAS FEELING A BIT...YOU KNOW... THE MUSIC...?
NO WORRIES. IT CAN BE QUITE OVERWHELMING.
DO YOU WANT ME TO TURN THE LIGHTS DOWN?
WHEN I GET TENSE OR STRESSED I SLOW THE MUSIC DOWN IN MY HEAD. I MOVE TO EVERY OTHER BEAT.
WHEN YOU HEAR 1-2-3-4-1-2-3-4 YOU JUST THINK OF IT LIKE 1...2... 3...4...
WAIT...
HELLO? IS SOMEONE IN THERE?
YOU HEAR MUSIC IN YOUR HEAD? I DO TOO. I MEAN, I DID, DOWN BY THE RIVER.
ONLY IT WASN'T LIKE THE BAND. THAT WAS REALLY, I DON'T KNOW...LIKE THE WORLD WAS COMING TO AN END...
HA! OKAY, THAT'S FAIR ENOUGH. THE BAND CAN GET A BIT CACOPHONOUS.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT MUSIC.
WELL, NOT ALL MUSIC IS LIKE *THAT*. IT'S A BIG EXPERIMENT.
THE IMPORTANT THING FOR NOW IS FOR YOU TO HAVE FUN AND ENJOY THE MOMENT.
THING IS, I'VE ONLY BEEN OUT OF THE GRID FOR A FEW HOURS AND...
...PROMISE YOU WON'T LAUGH, BUT WHEN I WAS DOWN BY THE RIVER IT WAS LIKE...
YOU HEARD MUSIC IN THE RIVER.
HOW DID YOU KNOW? YOU THINK I'M MAD, DON'T YOU?
FAR FROM IT. IT HAPPENED TO ME TOO, WHEN I WAS A KID.
I WAS IN A BOAT ON A RIVER. THERE WAS THE WHINE OF THE MOTOR AND THE BURBLING SOUND OF THE WATER.
YEAH.
THEN, OUT OF NOWHERE, I HEARD VIOLINS, CELLOS, HARPS, ANGELIC CHOIRS.
'COURSE I DIDN'T KNOW ANY OF THE WORDS FOR THOSE THINGS BACK THEN.
BUT IT WAS A SUBLIME EXPERIENCE AND I'VE BEEN CHASING IT EVER SINCE. THAT DEEP, PROFOUND...
...BEAUTY...
YOU'RE LIKE ME. YOU CAN HEAR THE MUSIC OTHERS CAN'T. NEXT TIME IT ALL FEELS LIKE TOO MUCH, JUST LISTEN CAREFULLY. YOUR NOTE WILL BE THERE.
FEEL BETTER NOW?
I...I THINK SO. WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
OH, I'M JUST THE CARETAKER.
I'LL SEE YOU AROUND, LITTLE SPARROW.

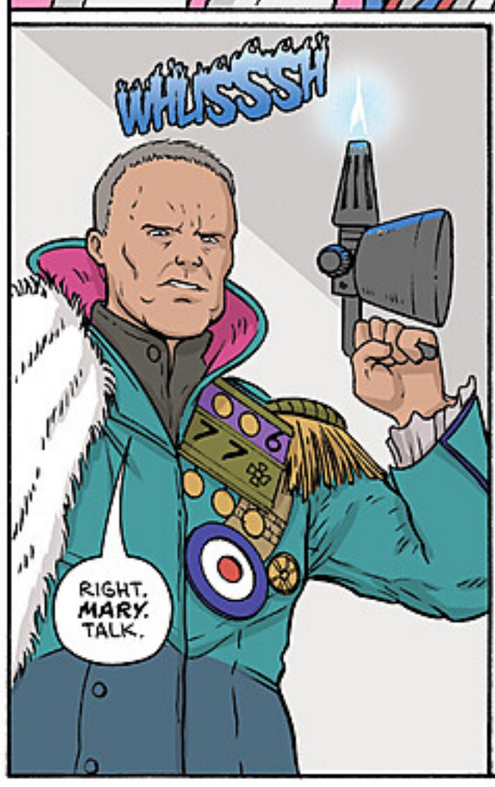

FROM THE CENTRAL ARCHIVE: RECORDING OF A SPEECH BY JUMBO 7 TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE.
CITIZENS OF GREAT BRITAIN! I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CHIEF GRID ENGINEER. HIS NAME IS BOBOK AND HE WILL MAKE UPGRADES TO THE GRID, WHICH WILL ALLOW PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT WITH EVERY GRID LIFE.
INSTEAD OF JUST PASSING THE TIME UNTIL WE HAVE CLEANSED THE ENVIRONMENT, EACH OF YOU WILL RISE THROUGH SPIRITUAL LEVELS UNTIL YOU ACHIEVE PERFECTION. EACH STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT WILL BE COLOUR CODED FROM GREY THROUGH TO THE ULTIMATE LEVEL. I LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY WHEN I CAN ANNOUNCE OUR FIRST SILVER CHILD.
ALL RIGHT, SETTLE DOWN, FOLKS. UP NEXT WE HAVE A YOUNG PERFORMER WHO WILL BE ADDING HER NOTE TO THE COLLECTIVE MUSIC OF THE LIFE HOUSE.
GIVE A ROUND OF APPLAUSE TO MS. LAURA NORRIS, WHOSE CHOSEN INSTRUMENT IS HER VERY OWN VOCAL CORDS.
COME ON UP, LAURA.
'ERE SHE IS, READY TO GIVE 'ER ALL.
OUR ENGINEERS ARE GOING TO PERFORM THEIR SCIENTIFIC MAGIC, AND FEED LAURA'S MUSIC INTO THE SYSTEM THEN CHANNEL IT BACK TO YOU IN ENHANCED FORM...IT SAYS 'ERE... SO WE CAN PLAY IT ALL BACK IN A LOOP UNTIL IT BASICALLY BLOWS YOUR TINY MINDS.
YOU ALL RIGHT WITH THAT?
HOW ON EARTH DID YOU LOSE A FINGER, HENRY?
HI HENRY. YOU'RE MISSING THE ACTION.
NOT A WHOLE FINGER, PENNY, AND I DIDN'T REALLY LOSE IT. FOUND IT ON THE GROUND ACTUALLY.
THERE ARE SOME AMAZING PEOPLE PERFORMING ON THE MAIN STAGE.
WE ALL GET TO PERFORM, MARY, ONCE WE'VE HAD OUR STATS TAKEN, HEALTH CHECK, DNA SAMPLES. THEY EVEN HAVE SOME KIND OF MACHINE TO RECORD YOUR BRAINWAVES.
JUST SO LONG AS IT CAN'T ACTUALLY READ OUR MINDS. IN HENRY'S CASE, THAT COULD PROVE VERY EMBARASSING.
YEAH, I'LL BET.
HEY, LOOK WHO'S HERE.
HELLO, BOY. BEEN STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE?
AW, I LOVE YOU, TOO.

OUT! OUT!
EVERY LAST BLOODY ONE OF YOU!

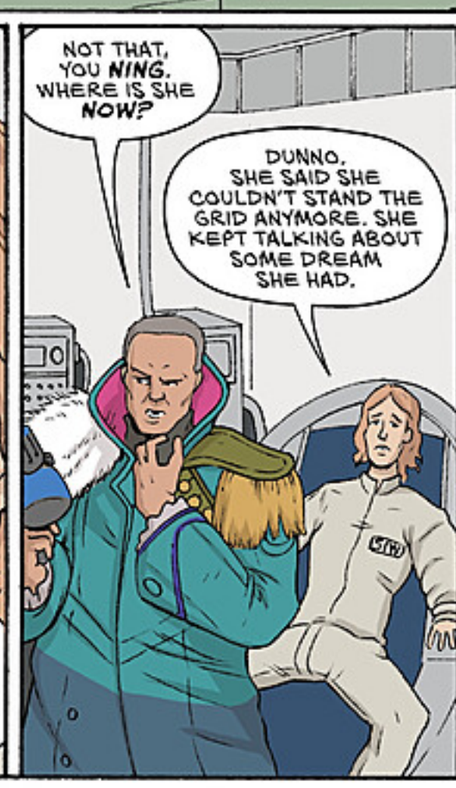

YOU TOO, BOLLOCK-BRAIN, I WANT THIS PLACE CLEARED. I AM ABOUT TO CONDUCT A TOP SECRET PERSONAL EXPERIMENT.
IT'S ON A NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS AND NONE OF YOU LOT NEED TO KNOW, GOT ME?


BLOCK OFF THAT DOOR AND STRAP THIS EVIL LITTLE TRAITOR INTO THAT GRID SEAT.

I'M NOT A TRAITOR. I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING.
DON'T ANSWER ME BACK, SOFT LAD, UNLESS YOU'RE TELLING ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW.
PASS ME MY TOOL KIT.


WHUSSSSH
RIGHT, MARY. TALK.

BLOODY HELL. ALRIGHT.
I'VE KNOW HER SINCE WE WERE KIDS. WE WERE PUT IN A BREEDING PAIR WHEN WE WERE SIXTEEN, THEN THEY HOUSED US AND STUCK US IN THE GRID...


NOT THAT, YOU NING. WHERE IS SHE NOW?
DUNNO. SHE SAID SHE COULDN'T STAND THE GRID ANYMORE. SHE KEPT TALKING ABOUT SOME DREAM SHE HAD.

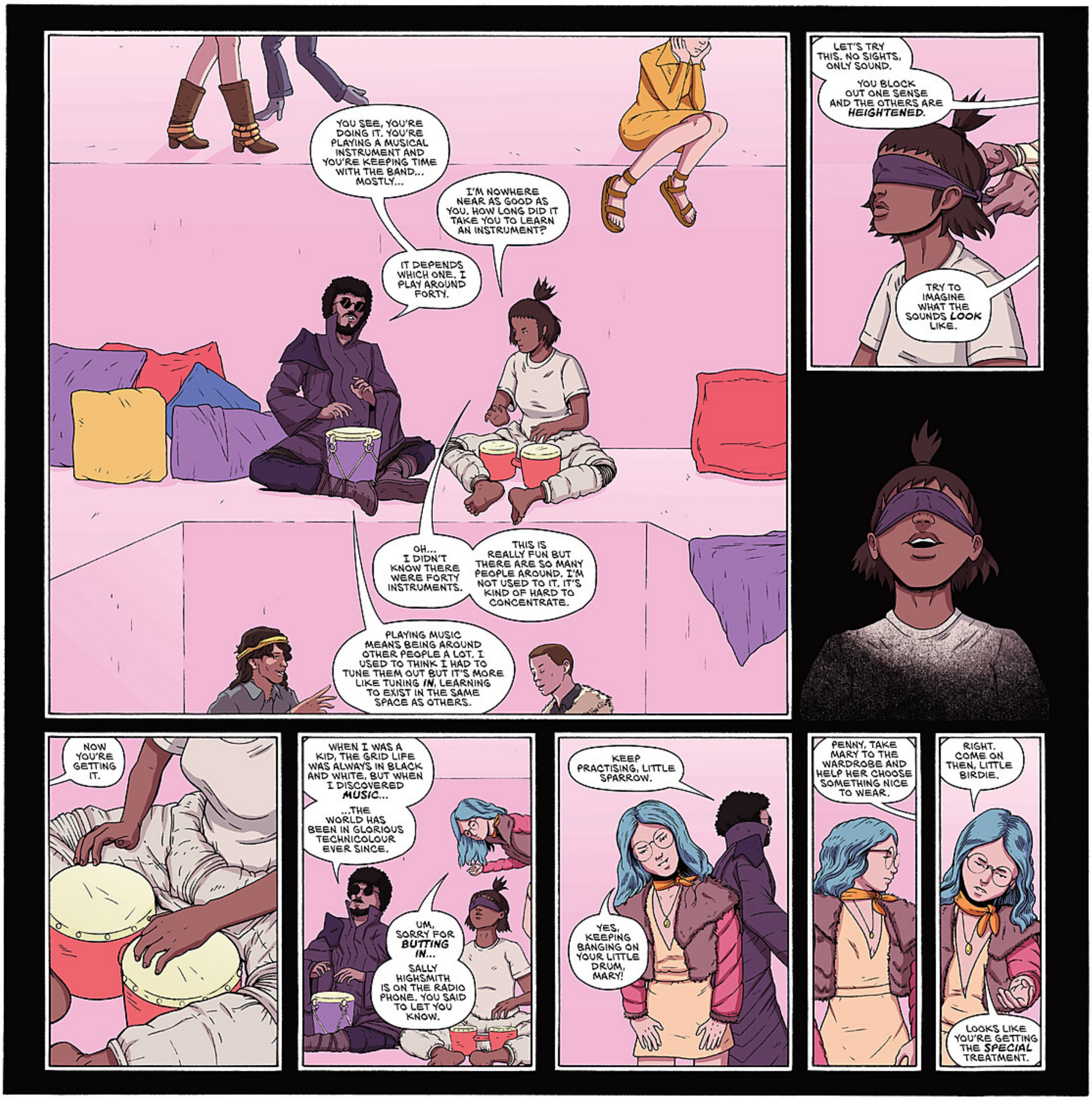
WHAT DREAM?! SPILL!
CHRIST! I DON'T KNOW. SHE WAS IN A PRISON. SHE BROKE OUT.
SAID SHE HAD TO GET TO...SOME TOWER.

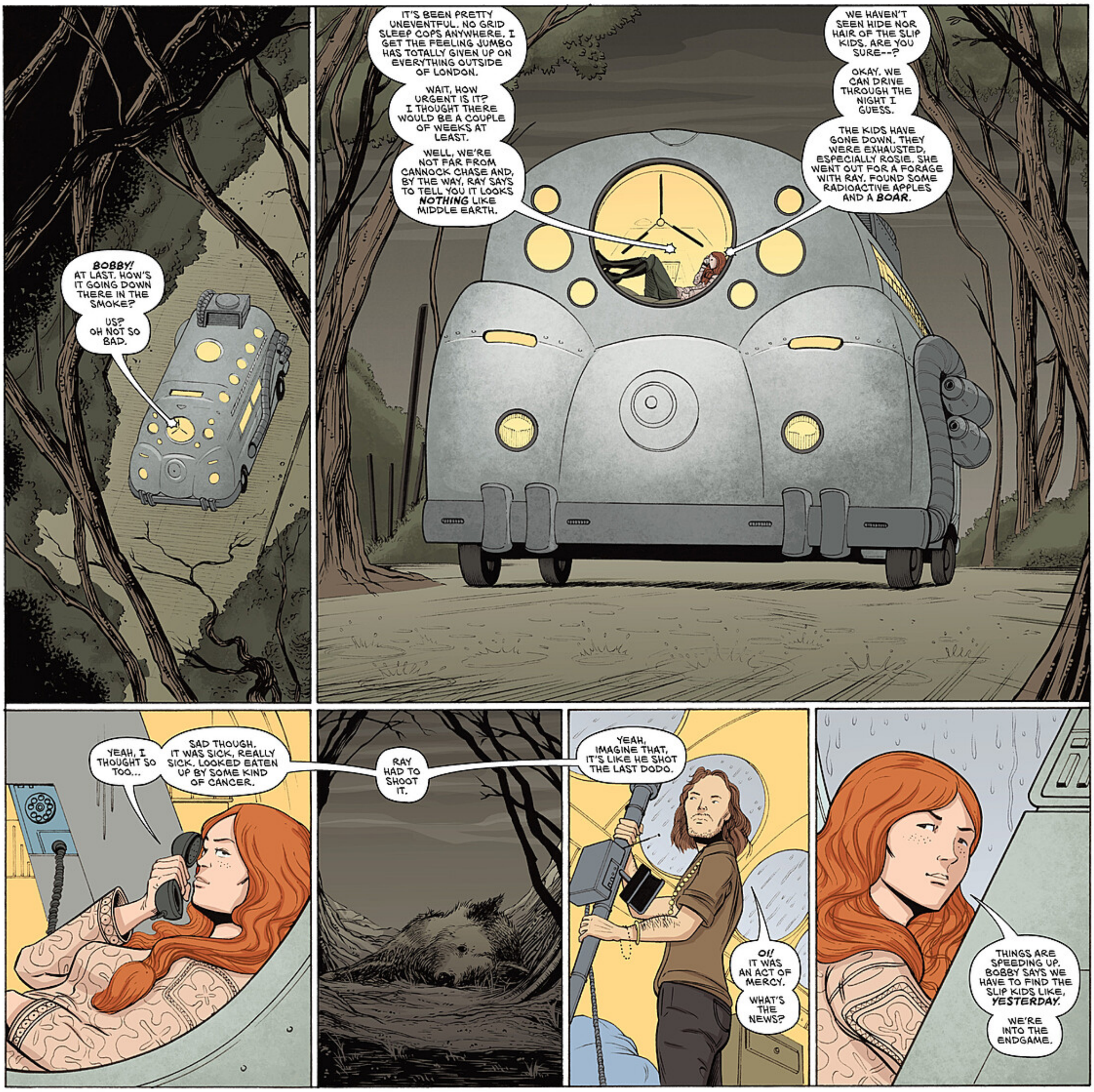
THE TOWER. I'VE BLOODY GOT HIM.
DON'T BOTHER GETTING UP, SOFT LAD, I'VE GOT PLANS FOR YOU.

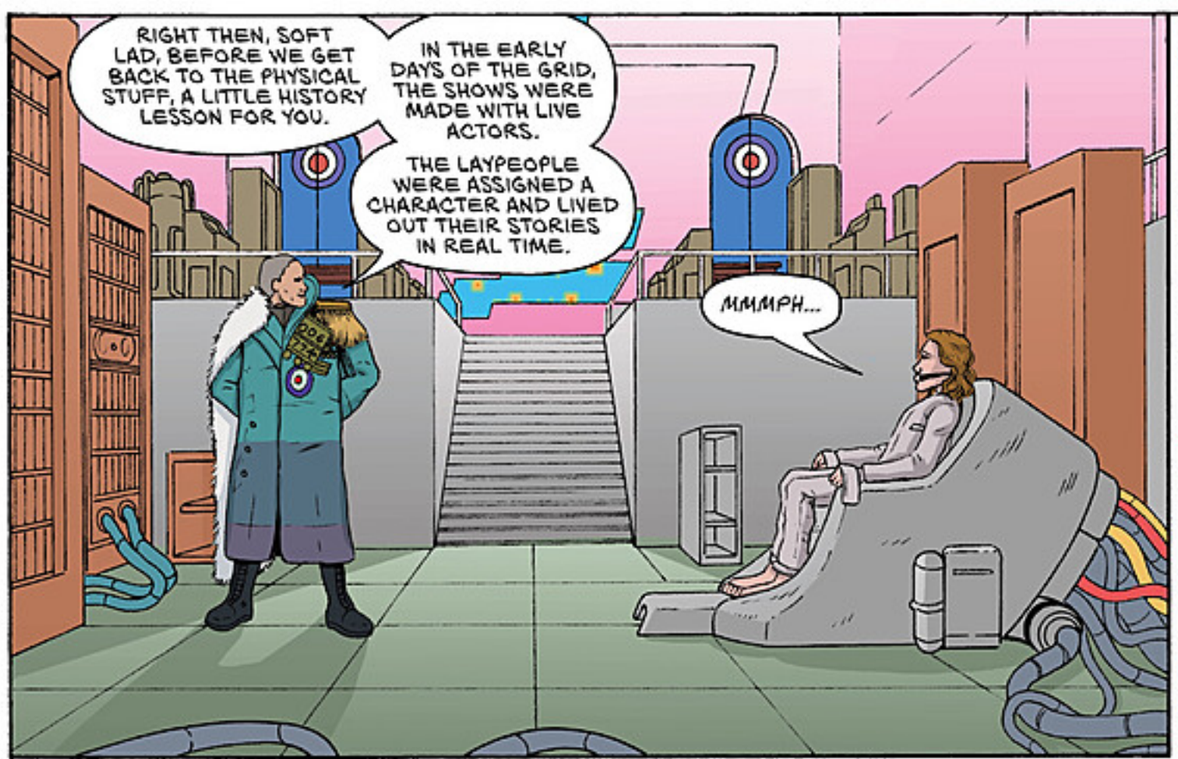
IT'S HIM! IT'S BOBBY!
SSHHHH!
EXCUSE ME INTERRUPTING THE PARTY. I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU ALL FOR THE MASSIVE RISKS YOU'VE TAKEN TO BE HERE.
IT'S TRUE THAT IF JUMBO AND HER FASCIST THUGS FOUND US, IT WOULD MEAN PRISON OR WORSE FOR THE LOT OF US.
THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WHEN I WAS WORKING HERE AS CHIEF ENGINEER, I CONSTRUCTED A POWERFUL FORCE FIELD, WHICH HAS NOW BEEN ACTIVATED AND WILL KEEP YOU ALL PERFECTLY SAFE.
THE REASON I CREATED THAT PROTECTION IS BECAUSE MY POSITION HAD GIVEN ME ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVES OF FORBIDDEN MUSIC.
THERE I FOUND AN INSPIRATIONAL FILM RECORDING OF A MUSIC FESTIVAL FROM BEFORE THE CLAMPDOWN.
IT GAVE ME A VISION OF A WORLD RULED BY PEACE AND LOVE, NOT VIOLENCE AND GREED.
"SADLY, THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE LACKED THE METHODOLOGY TO UNIFY THE PROCESS. THEY WOKE UP FROM THE DREAM TO FIND THEMSELVES IN A FIELD OF DESOLATION.
"STILL IT SENT A WARNING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT ACROSS THE WORLD AND EIGHT YEARS LATER, THE FIRST JUMBO ROSE TO POWER.
"SHE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF FEAR AND PARANOIA TO BAN MUSIC, BLAMING IT FOR ALL OF SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS."
THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE DARK AGE THAT LASTED TWO CENTURIES...
...UNTIL I LOOKED INTO THE GRID AND SAW YOUR SOULS GLEAMING LIKE FIREFLIES IN THE DARKNESS.
YOU'RE ALL LIKE ME. YOU UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO LIFT OUR SPIRITS AND FIND JOY, BUT NONE OF US CAN DO IT ALONE.
SO HERE'S WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO.
OVER THE NEXT THREE DAYS WE'LL FINISH MY GREAT EXPERIMENT. WE'LL CREATE THE MUSICAL LIFELINE OF EVERY-ONE HERE.
WE'LL COLLECT YOUR HEARTBEATS, YOUR BRAINWAVES, THE RHYTHM OF YOUR BREATHING.
USING THIS DATA, WE'LL GENERATE THE UNIQUE MELODY YOU EACH HAVE INSIDE YOU.
WE'LL PROCESS IT, PLAY IT BACK TO YOU AND YOU'LL PLAY IT BACK TO US. BAND AND AUDIENCE WILL BE ONE.
THEN ALL THE MELODIES WILL BE BLENDED TOGETHER, HARMONISED INTO WHAT I CALL THE ONE NOTE...
...THE UNIVERSAL CHORD THAT WILL RESTORE HUMANITY TO ITS ORIGINAL STATE OF BLISS.
WELCOME TO THE LIFE HOUSE, PEOPLE.
YOUR SONG IS HERE.

Y-YOU'RE THE CARETAKER!
YES, I TAKE CARE OF MOST THINGS AROUND HERE, LITTLE SPARROW.
RIGHT, FOLLOW THAT THEN, EH?
HERE'S A LITTLE NUMBER CALLED 'TEENAGE WASTELAND'.
LET'S SEE NOW, NEXT ON YOUR SCHEDULE IS A MEETING WITH YOUR TAILOR. SHE HAS A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS ABOUT--
TEACH ME!
BOBBY IS VERY BUSY RIGHT NOW. HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO--
HUSH, PENNY. LET HER SPEAK.
TEACH ME. I WANT YOU TO TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.
WHATEVER THIS IS INSIDE ME, I WANT TO UNDERSTAND IT.
PENNY, RE-SCHEDULE THE MEETING WITH MY TAILOR.

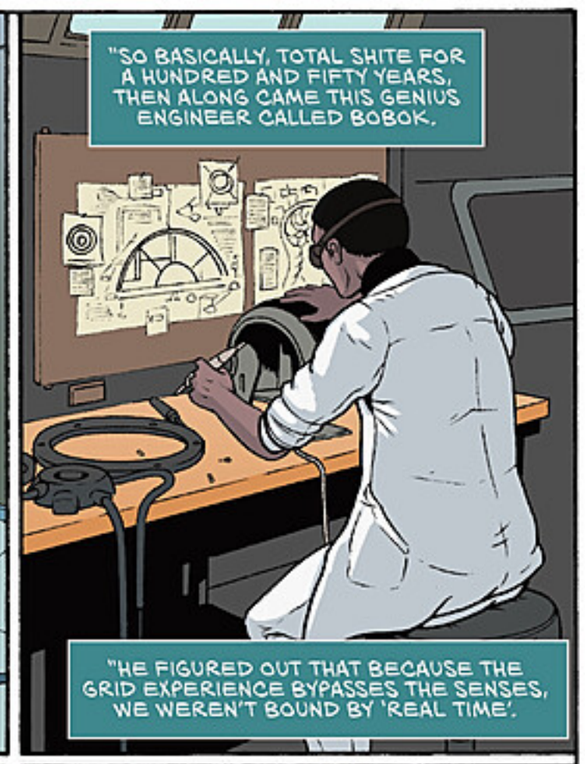
LOOK AT THESE, DAD. FINALLY, SOME GOOD EATING. LET'S TAKE THEM IN.
DON'T TOUCH THEM, ROSIE.
WHY NOT? THEY'RE TOTALLY PERFECT, NOT A MARK ON THEM.
EXACTLY. NOTHING IN THE FOREST WANTS TO EAT THEM. EVEN THE INSECTS HAVEN'T TOUCHED THEM.
LET ME TAKE A READING FOR RADIOACTIVITY.
LOOK AT THIS! THEY'RE OFF THE SCALE!
BUT JUMBO SAYS THAT EVERYTHING'S GETTING BETTER. SHE SAID--
SORRY ROSIE, JUMBO IS LYING THROUGH HER TEETH. THERE IS NO CLEAN-UP. THE POLLUTION IS GETTING WORSE BY THE DAY. CHEMICALS, RADIOACTIVITY.
SALLY, YOU WERE RIGHT. NOTHING USEABLE OUT HERE.
DID YOU GET THROUGH TO BOBBY?
NOTHING. HE'S PROBABLY BUSY WITH THE LAUNCH OF HIS GRAND FINALE.
DAD! ROSIE!! GET IN! GET IN!!
THERE'S A BOAR!
DON'T BE SILLY, BEN. BOARS HAVE BEEN EXTINCT FOR AGES.


YOU SEE, YOU'RE DOING IT. YOU'RE PLAYING A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT AND YOU'RE KEEPING TIME WITH THE BAND... MOSTLY...
I'M NOWHERE NEAR AS GOOD AS YOU. HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO LEARN AN INSTRUMENT?
IT DEPENDS WHICH ONE. I PLAY AROUND FORTY.
OH... I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE FORTY INSTRUMENTS.
THIS IS REALLY FUN BUT THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE AROUND. I'M NOT USED TO IT. IT'S KIND OF HARD TO CONCENTRATE.
PLAYING MUSIC MEANS BEING AROUND OTHER PEOPLE A LOT. I USED TO THINK I HAD TO TUNE THEM OUT BUT IT'S MORE LIKE TUNING IN, LEARNING TO EXIST IN THE SAME SPACE AS OTHERS.
LET'S TRY THIS. NO SIGHTS, ONLY SOUND.
YOU BLOCK OUT ONE SENSE AND THE OTHERS ARE HEIGHTENED.
TRY TO IMAGINE WHAT THE SOUNDS LOOK LIKE.
NOW YOU'RE GETTING IT.
WHEN I WAS A KID, THE GRID LIFE WAS ALWAYS IN BLACK AND WHITE, BUT WHEN I DISCOVERED MUSIC...
...THE WORLD HAS BEEN IN GLORIOUS TECHNICOLOUR EVER SINCE.
UM, SORRY FOR BUTTING IN...
SALLY HIGHSMITH IS ON THE RADIO PHONE. YOU SAID TO LET YOU KNOW.
KEEP PRACTISING, LITTLE SPARROW.
YES, KEEPING BANGING ON YOUR LITTLE DRUM, MARY!
PENNY, TAKE MARY TO THE WARDROBE AND HELP HER CHOOSE SOMETHING NICE TO WEAR.
RIGHT. COME ON THEN, LITTLE BIRDIE.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GETTING THE SPECIAL TREATMENT.

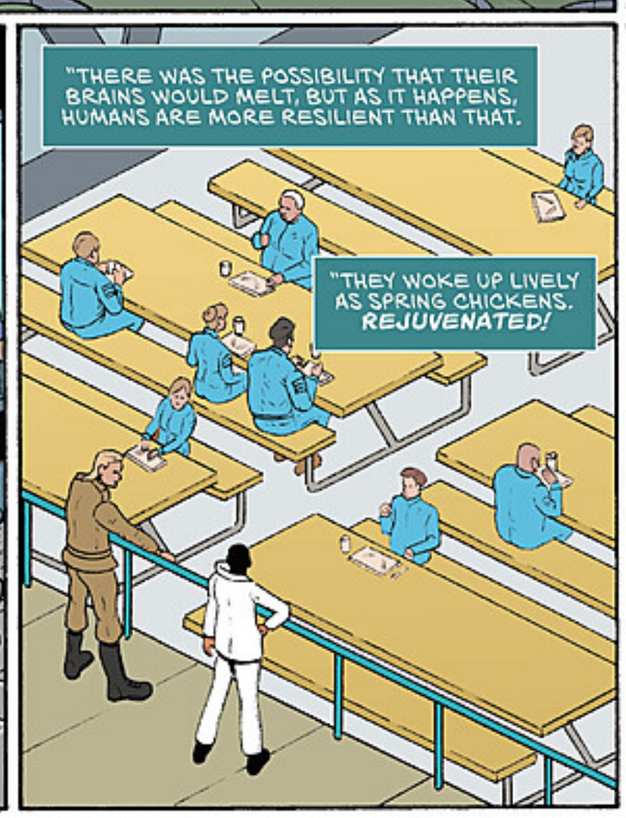

BOBBY! AT LAST. HOW'S IT GOING DOWN THERE IN THE SMOKE?
US? OH NOT SO BAD.
IT'S BEEN PRETTY UNEVENTFUL. NO GRID SLEEP COPS ANYWHERE. I GET THE FEELING JUMBO HAS TOTALLY GIVEN UP ON EVERYTHING OUTSIDE OF LONDON.
WAIT, HOW URGENT IS IT? I THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE A COUPLE OF WEEKS AT LEAST.
WELL, WE'RE NOT FAR FROM CANNOCK CHASE AND, BY THE WAY, RAY SAYS TO TELL YOU IT LOOKS NOTHING LIKE MIDDLE EARTH.
WE HAVEN'T SEEN HIDE NOR HAIR OF THE SLIP KIDS. ARE YOU SURE--?
OKAY. WE CAN DRIVE THROUGH THE NIGHT I GUESS.
THE KIDS HAVE GONE DOWN. THEY WERE EXHAUSTED, ESPECIALLY ROSIE. SHE WENT OUT FOR A FORAGE WITH RAY. FOUND SOME RADIOACTIVE APPLES AND A BOAR.
YEAH, I THOUGHT SO TOO...
SAD THOUGH. IT WAS SICK, REALLY SICK. LOOKED EATEN UP BY SOME KIND OF CANCER.
RAY HAD TO SHOOT IT.
YEAH, IMAGINE THAT, IT'S LIKE HE SHOT THE LAST DODO.
OI! IT WAS AN ACT OF MERCY.
WHAT'S THE NEWS?
THINGS ARE SPEEDING UP. BOBBY SAYS WE HAVE TO FIND THE SLIP KIDS LIKE, YESTERDAY.
WE'RE INTO THE ENDGAME.

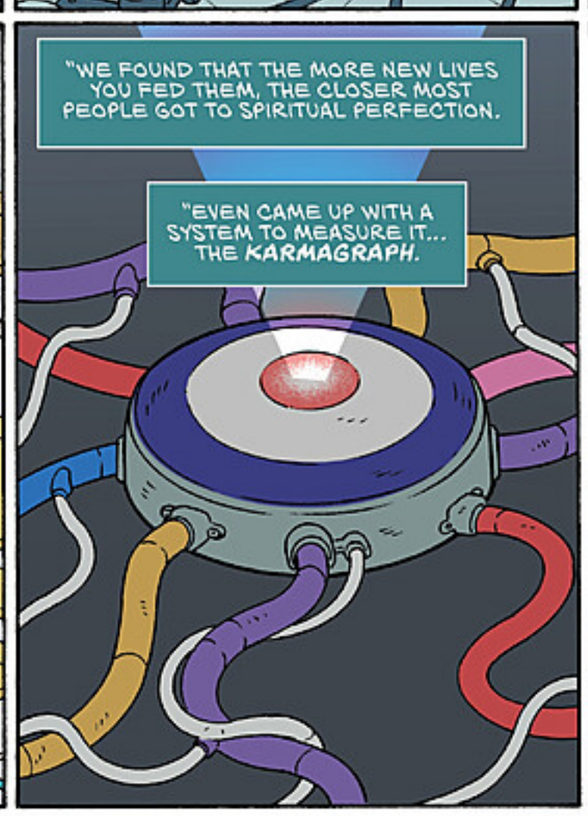

RIGHT THEN, SOFT LAD, BEFORE WE GET BACK TO THE PHYSICAL STUFF, A LITTLE HISTORY LESSON FOR YOU.
IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE GRID, THE SHOWS WERE MADE WITH LIVE ACTORS.
THE LAYPEOPLE WERE ASSIGNED A CHARACTER AND LIVED OUT THEIR STORIES IN REAL TIME.
MMMPH...

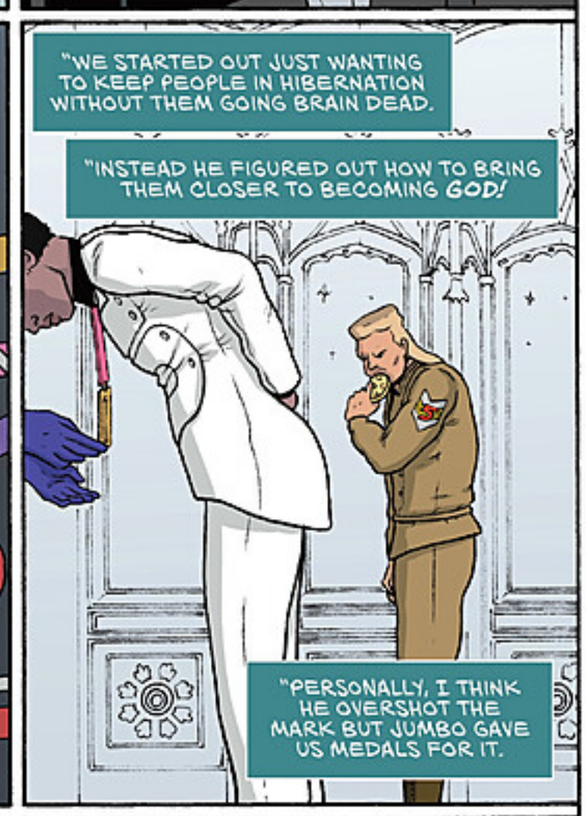
"I'M JUST GLAD I WAS SELECTED FOR OFFICER TRAINING SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO WATCH ALL THAT SHITE.
"BUT WHAT DID THEY KNOW? THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE.

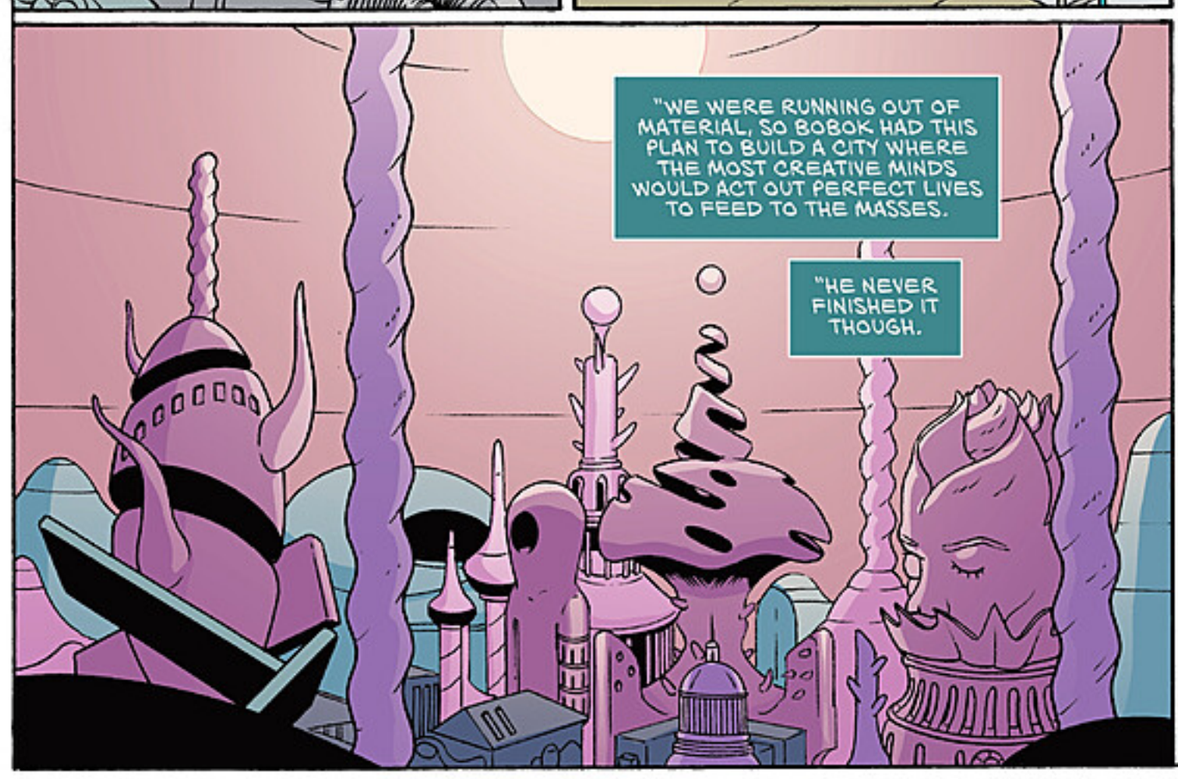

"SO BASICALLY, TOTAL SHITE FOR A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS, THEN ALONG CAME THIS GENIUS ENGINEER CALLED BOBOK.
"HE FIGURED OUT THAT BECAUSE THE GRID EXPERIENCE BYPASSES THE SENSES, WE WEREN'T BOUND BY 'REAL TIME'.

"HE RAN AN EXPERIMENT WITH A FEW TEST SUBJECTS, ZIPPED A WHOLE LIBRARY OF PROGRAMMING INTO THEIR BRAINS OVER THREE NIGHTS.


"THERE WAS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEIR BRAINS WOULD MELT, BUT AS IT HAPPENS, HUMANS ARE MORE RESILIENT THAN THAT.
"THEY WOKE UP LIVELY AS SPRING CHICKENS. REJUVENATED!


"WE FOUND THAT THE MORE NEW LIVES YOU FED THEM, THE CLOSER MOST PEOPLE GOT TO SPIRITUAL PERFECTION.
"EVEN CAME UP WITH A SYSTEM TO MEASURE IT... THE KARMAGRAPH.

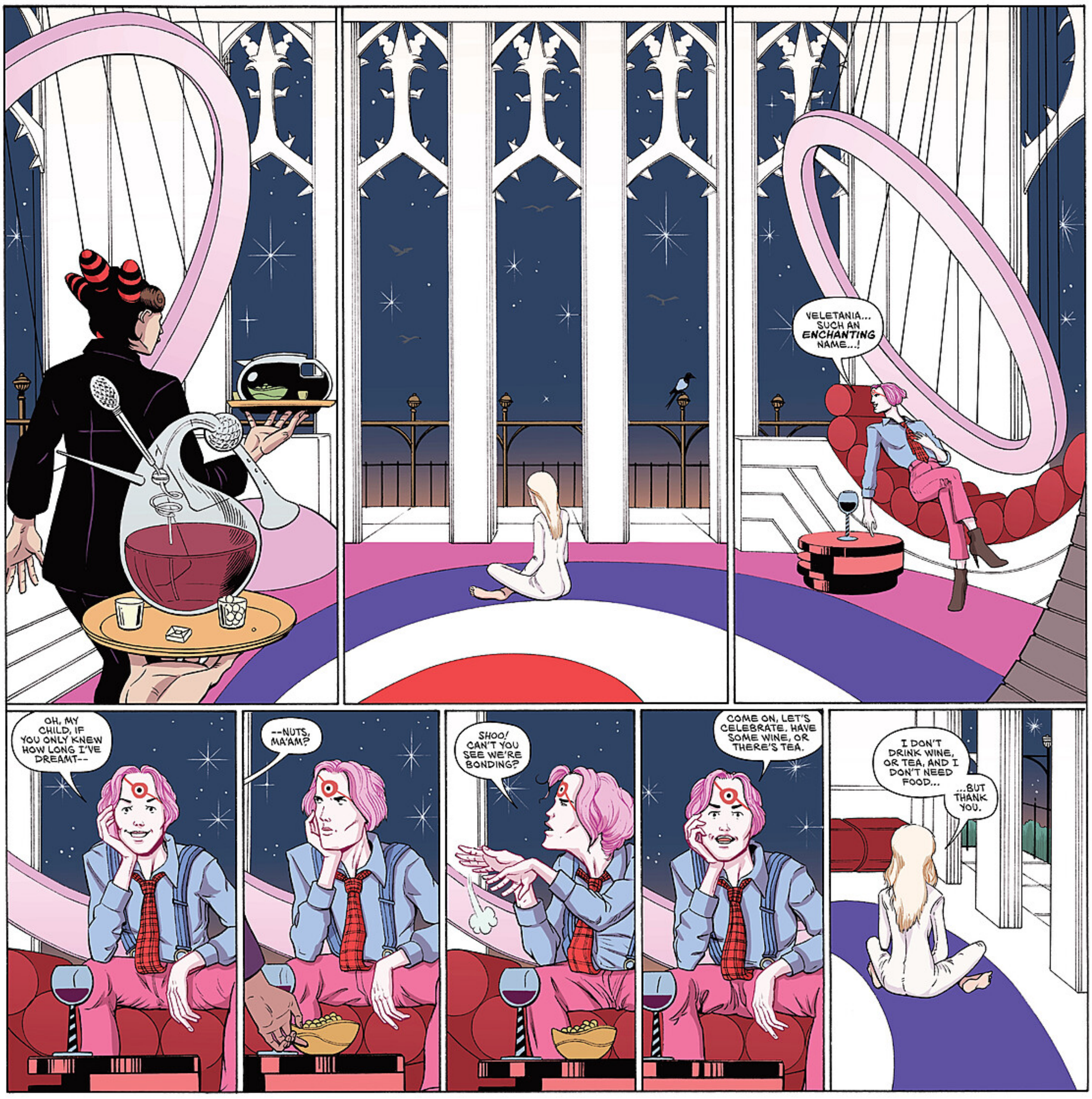

"WE STARTED OUT JUST WANTING TO KEEP PEOPLE IN HIBERNATION WITHOUT THEM GOING BRAIN DEAD.
"INSTEAD HE FIGURED OUT HOW TO BRING THEM CLOSER TO BECOMING GOD!
"PERSONALLY, I THINK HE OVERSHOT THE MARK BUT JUMBO GAVE US MEDALS FOR IT.

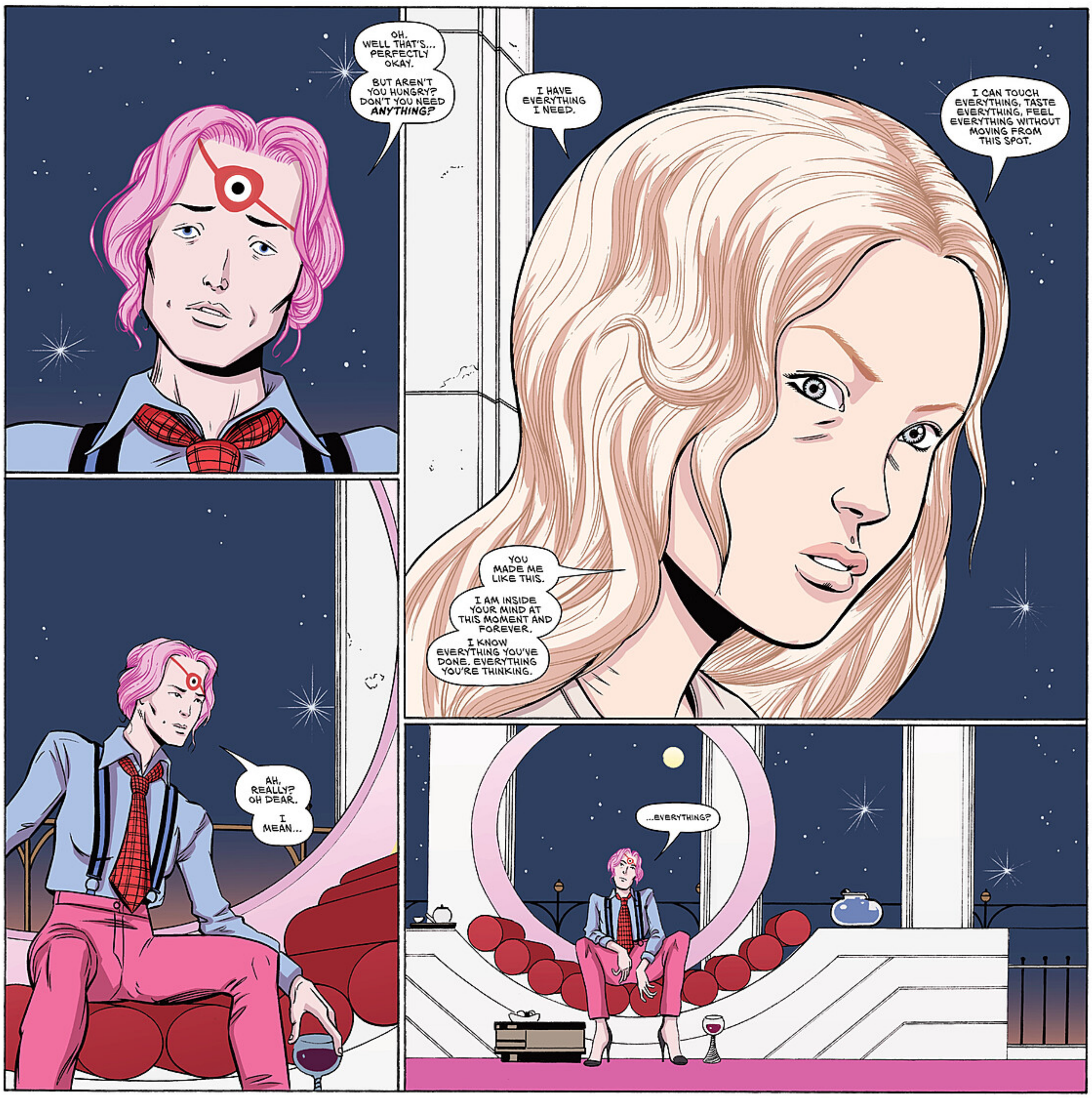

"WE WERE RUNNING OUT OF MATERIAL, SO BOBOK HAD THIS PLAN TO BUILD A CITY WHERE THE MOST CREATIVE MINDS WOULD ACT OUT PERFECT LIVES TO FEED TO THE MASSES.
"HE NEVER FINISHED IT THOUGH.

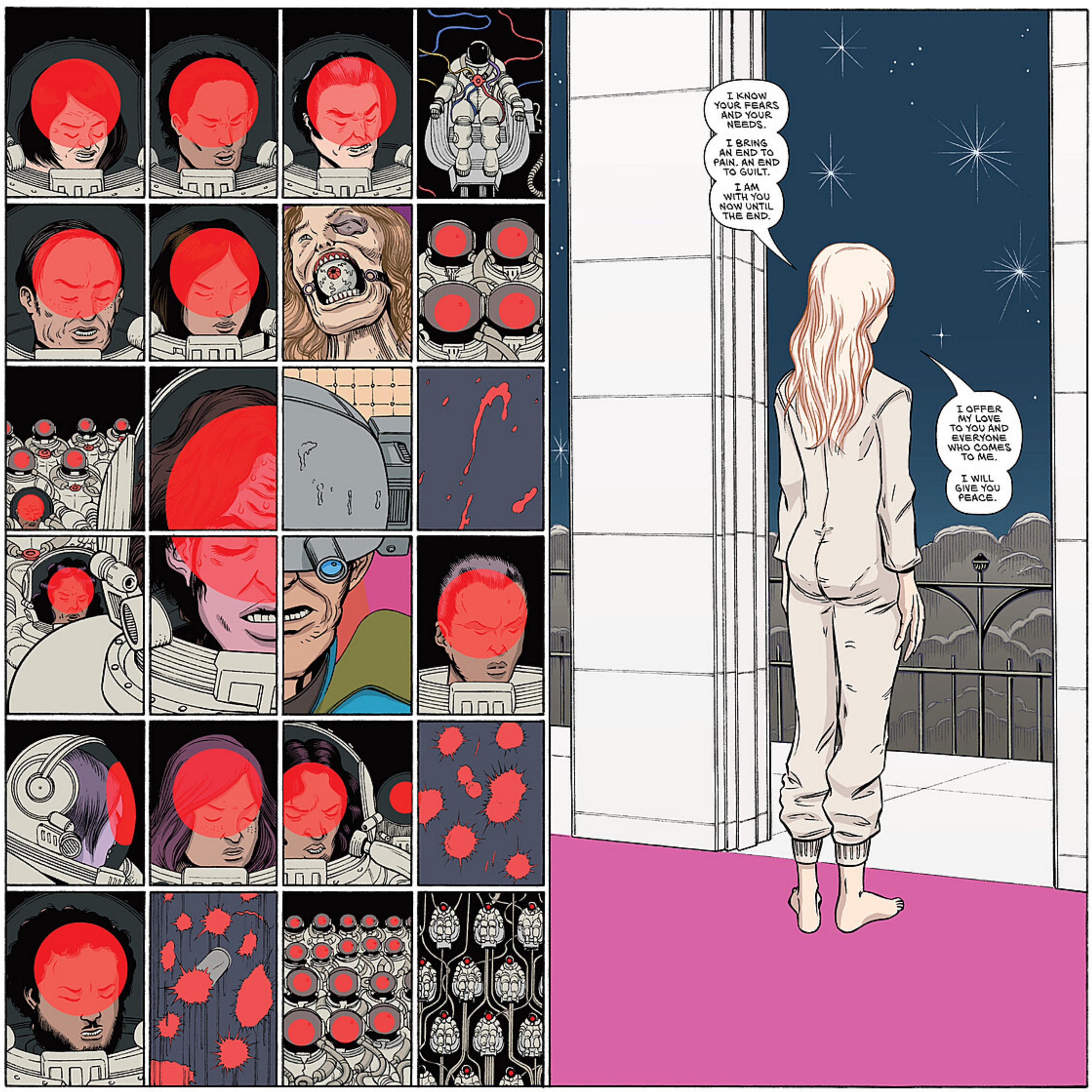
"HE LEFT OUR LIFE RECORDERS TO WORK IN VIRTUAL WORLDS BECAUSE, WHILE HE WAS HUNTING THROUGH THE ARCHIVES FOR IDEAS, HE MADE A DISCOVERY."

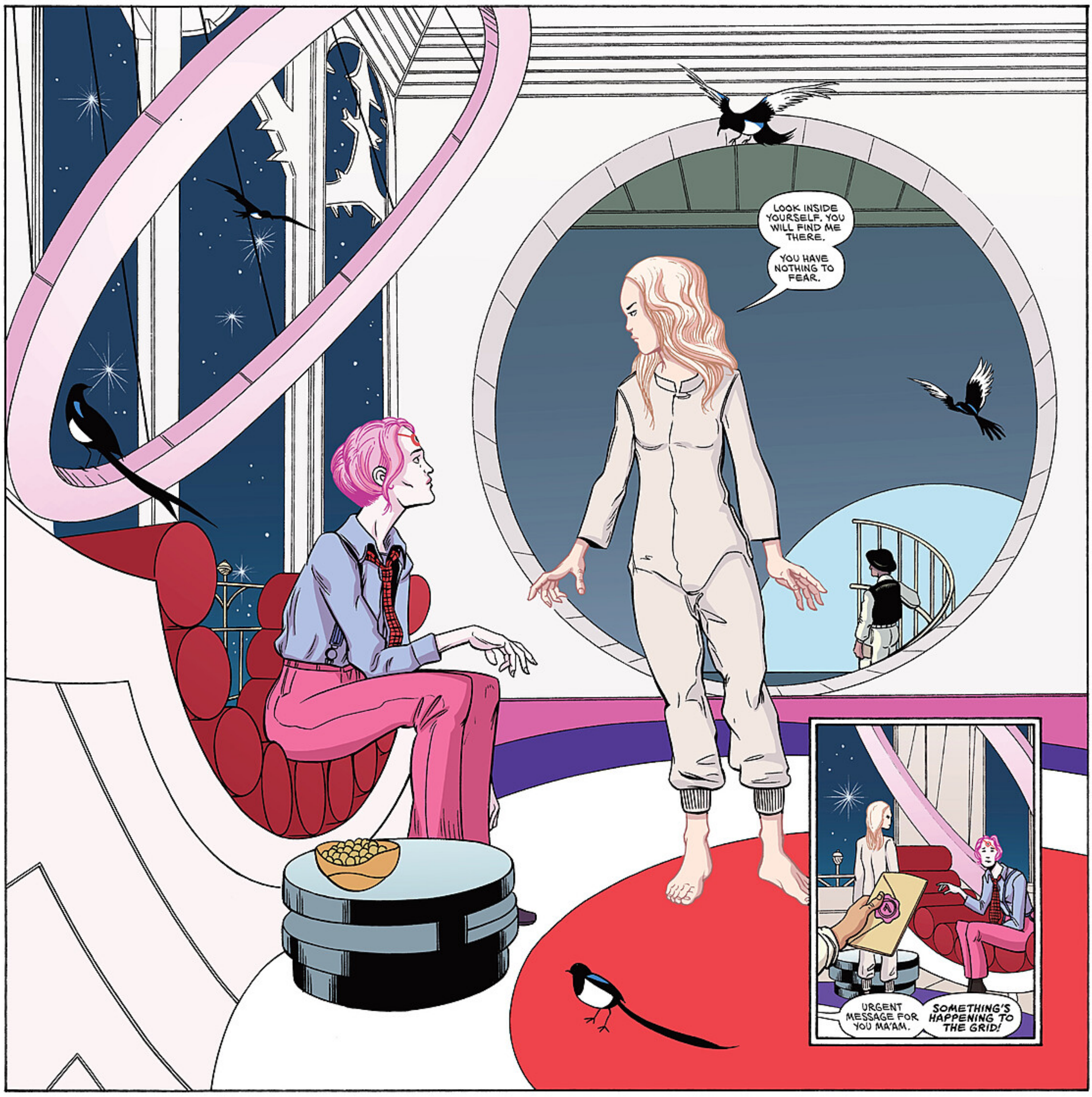
MUSIC! THE THING WE BANNED ALONG WITH RELIGION AND RANDOM SEX.
TURNS OUT MUSIC IS THE BASIC BUILDING-BLOCK OF THE UNIVERSE.

"HE TRIED EXPLAINING IT TO ME ONCE. HE SAID THAT HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND QUANTUM MECHANICS ARE THE TWO GREAT MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE AND ONE IS THE KEY TO THE OTHER.
"IT WAS A BIT BEYOND ME, TO BE HONEST, BUT BASICALLY, IT COMES DOWN TO 'EVERYTHING IS VIBRATIONS.'
"SO, USING WAVEFORMS INSTEAD OF BINARY CODE, BOBOK BUILT A COMPUTER THAT TALKS TO THE BRAIN IN ITS OWN LANGUAGE.
"THE SLEEPER'S SUIT READS THEIR ESSENTIAL SELF AS A WAVEFORM, SENDS IT TO THE CENTRAL COMPUTER AND A LIFE EXPERIENCE IS TAILORED TO THEM, ZIPPED BACK TO THEIR BRAIN AND SO ON...
"...A CONTINUOUS CYCLE UNTIL THEY BECOME PERFECT.
"NOW I'M SUPPOSED TO BE HAPPY BECAUSE THE GRID FINALLY BORE FRUIT...
"...JUMBO'S 'PERFECT ONE.'"
DO YOU KNOW WHAT SHE PLANS TO DO WITH THIS SILVER CHILD?
'COURSE YOU FUCKING DON'T!
CAN'T SAY I'M CERTAIN MYSELF, BUT I KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE BAD FOR EVERYONE, SO I'M ABOUT TO SCREW IT ALL UP FOR HER.
REMEMBER THAT PLAN TO HAVE OUR ACTORS STRAP A CAMERA ON THEIR FACES AND FEED THEIR LIVES INTO THE GRID?
GOT THE PROTOTYPE RIGHT HERE.
THEY'RE GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ME! THE LIFE OF A TORTURER PLUGGED INTO THE ENTIRE NATION.
"NOW THIS IS REALLY GOING TO FUCK THINGS UP.
NNNGHHHH...
"THE FINAL PROGRAMME...AN INFINITE LOOP OF BAD KARMA.
"THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING TORTURED BY ME...
"...FOREVER."


VELETANIA... SUCH AN ENCHANTING NAME...!
OH, MY CHILD, IF YOU ONLY KNEW HOW LONG I'VE DREAMT--
--NUTS, MA'AM?
SHOO! CAN'T YOU SEE WE'RE BONDING?
COME ON, LET'S CELEBRATE. HAVE SOME WINE, OR THERE'S TEA.
I DON'T DRINK WINE, OR TEA, AND I DON'T NEED FOOD...
...BUT THANK YOU.


OH. WELL THAT'S... PERFECTLY OKAY.
BUT AREN'T YOU HUNGRY? DON'T YOU NEED ANYTHING?
I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED.
I CAN TOUCH EVERYTHING, TASTE EVERYTHING, FEEL EVERYTHING WITHOUT MOVING FROM THIS SPOT.
YOU MADE ME LIKE THIS.
I AM INSIDE YOUR MIND AT THIS MOMENT AND FOREVER.
I KNOW EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE. EVERYTHING YOU'RE THINKING.
AH, REALLY? OH DEAR.
I MEAN...
...EVERYTHING?


I KNOW YOUR FEARS AND YOUR NEEDS.
I BRING AN END TO PAIN. AN END TO GUILT.
I AM WITH YOU NOW UNTIL THE END.
I OFFER MY LOVE TO YOU AND EVERYONE WHO COMES TO ME.
I WILL GIVE YOU PEACE.


LOOK INSIDE YOURSELF. YOU WILL FIND ME THERE.
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
URGENT MESSAGE FOR YOU MA'AM.
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO THE GRID!

THESE SHOULD FIT YOU. WE'RE ABOUT THE SAME SIZE.
YOU MEAN THESE ARE YOURS?
SO ARE YOU BOBBY'S--
HA HA! GOD, NO, HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT KIND OF...
...WAIT, WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO SAY?
ASSISTANT?
OH, RIGHT. YEAH, PERSONAL ASSISTANT, STYLIST, GENERAL DOGSBODY, THAT'S ME.
SO HOW OLD ARE YOU ANYWAY?
I DON'T KNOW. I'VE SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE HIBERNATING. YOU LOSE TRACK WHEN YOU'RE ON THE GRID.
I THINK JUMBO FOUR WAS IN CHARGE WHEN I FIRST WENT INTO GRIDSLEEP.
WOAH, GET A LOAD OF ME!
YEAH TERRIFIC. UM, MARY, YOU DO REALISE THAT IF IT WAS JUMBO FOUR, THAT MAKES YOU AT LEAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD.
HMM? YEAH, I GUESS. SO WHAT DO YOU RECKON ABOUT THIS OUTFIT?
IT WAS ONE OF MY FAVOURITES. TAKES A BIT OF NERVE TO PULL IT OFF, ESPECIALLY FOR A WOMAN OF YOUR AGE, BUT I'M SURE YOU'LL MANAGE IT.
BOBBY SHOULD BE ON STAGE ANY MINUTE.
TAKE YOUR TIME. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.

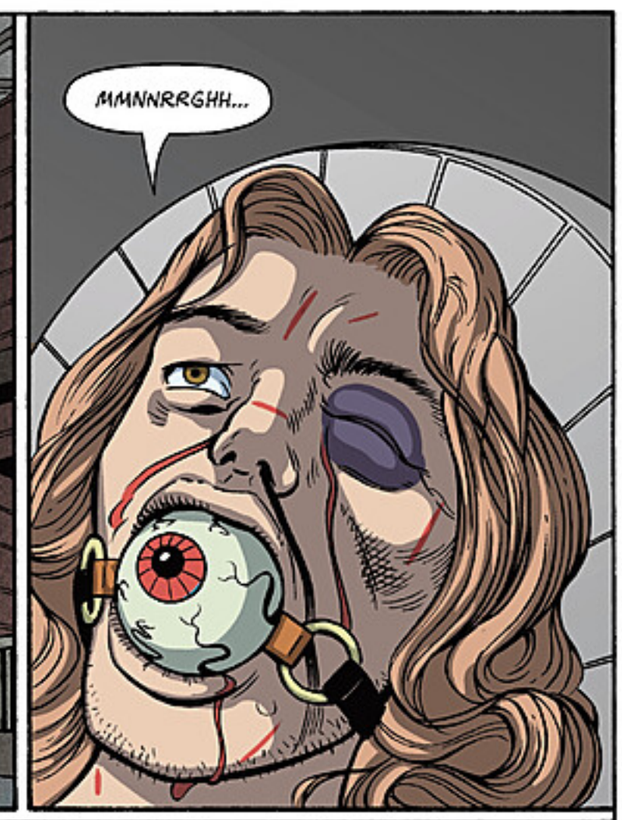
THERE ONCE WAS A NOTE, PURE AND EASY...
LISTEN...
THERE'S MUSIC EVERYWHERE.
THERE ARE THE RHYTHMS OF THE NATURAL WORLD, THE WOODPECKER'S TAPPING, THE OWL'S REPEATED HOOT, THE WHISTLE OF THE WIND THROUGH THOSE TINY GAPS IN THE SEALED WINDOWS WHEN YOU LAY IN YOUR GRID SUITS.
EVEN INDUSTRIAL MACHINES MAKE PERCUSSIVE NOISES THAT DISTRACT AND ENGAGE.
THE BANGING OF AIR TRAPPED IN HEATING PIPES, THE CHOPPING OF HELICOPTER BLADES, THE WHINE AND COUGH OF A STRAINING ENGINE.
YOU'VE BEEN CUT OFF FROM POPULAR MUSIC, BUT EVEN IN YOUR GRID SUITS YOU HEARD THE RHYTHMS OF YOUR OWN BODIES, THE AIR INFLATING YOUR LUNGS, THE BLOOD RUSHING THROUGH YOUR VEINS.
THE MUSIC HAS BEEN WAITING FOR US, LIKE MICHAELANGELO'S 'DAVID' SAT WAITING INSIDE A BLOCK OF MARBLE...
NOW IT'S TIME TO START CARVING, TO FREE THE MUSIC.
BLIMEY! HE GOES ON A BIT DON'T HE?
NEVER MIND THE FLUTE, PICK UP YOUR FECKIN' GUITAR AND PLAY!
KEEP QUIET YOU IDIOT! WE'RE MAKING HISTORY HERE AND IF YOU MESS IT UP--
KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON, LUV.
SHE'S HERE.
OKAY EVERYONE, WE HAVE A SPECIAL TREAT FOR YOU.
A PERFORMANCE FROM A NEW ARRIVAL, THE LITTLE SPARROW...

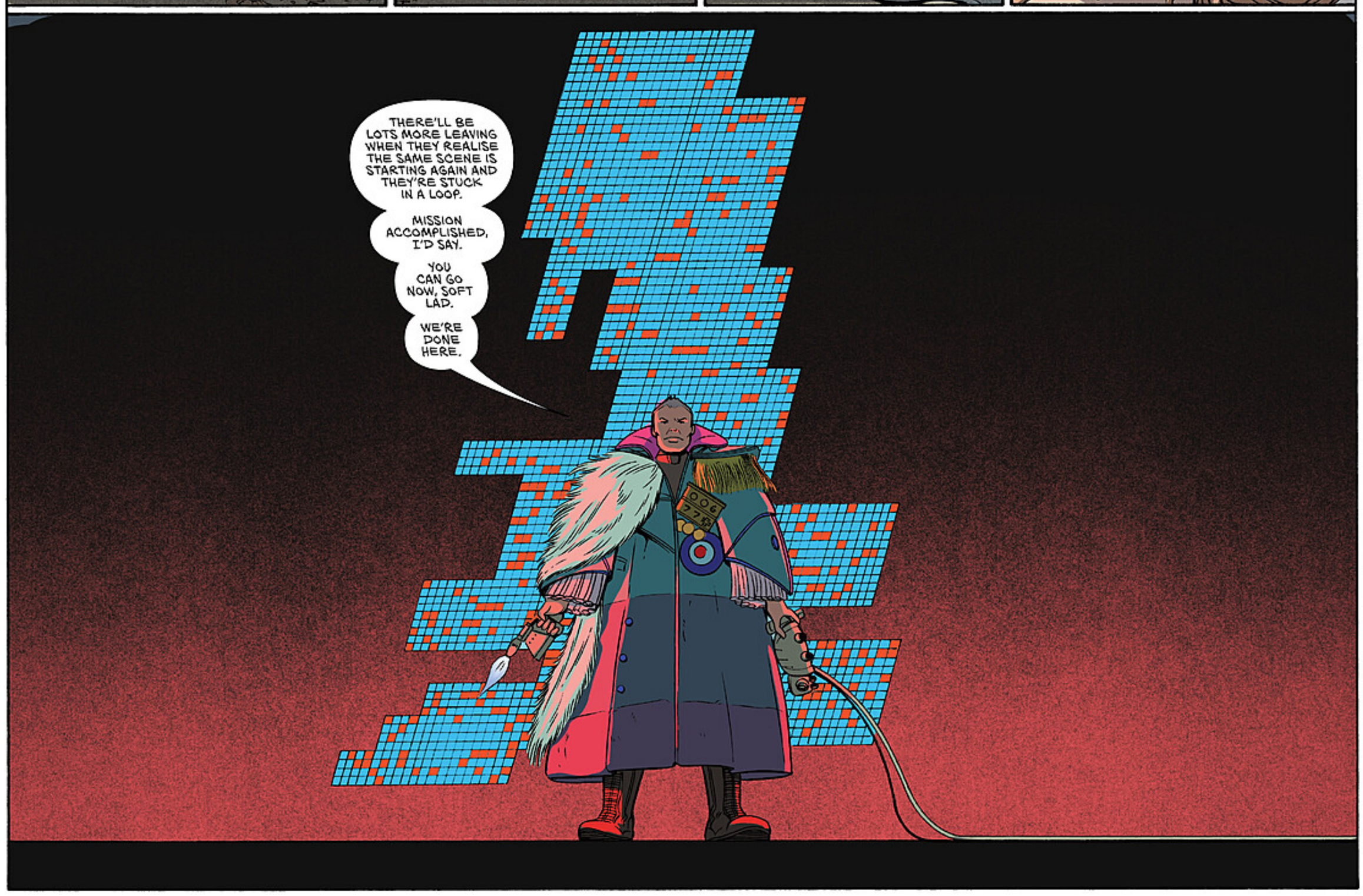
COME ON UP HERE, MARY. DON'T BE SHY.
JUST DO AS I TOLD YOU. CLOSE YOUR EYES AND LISTEN TO THE MUSIC INSIDE.
WHAT'S WITH *HER?* I THOUGHT WE WERE MAKING HISTORY HERE?

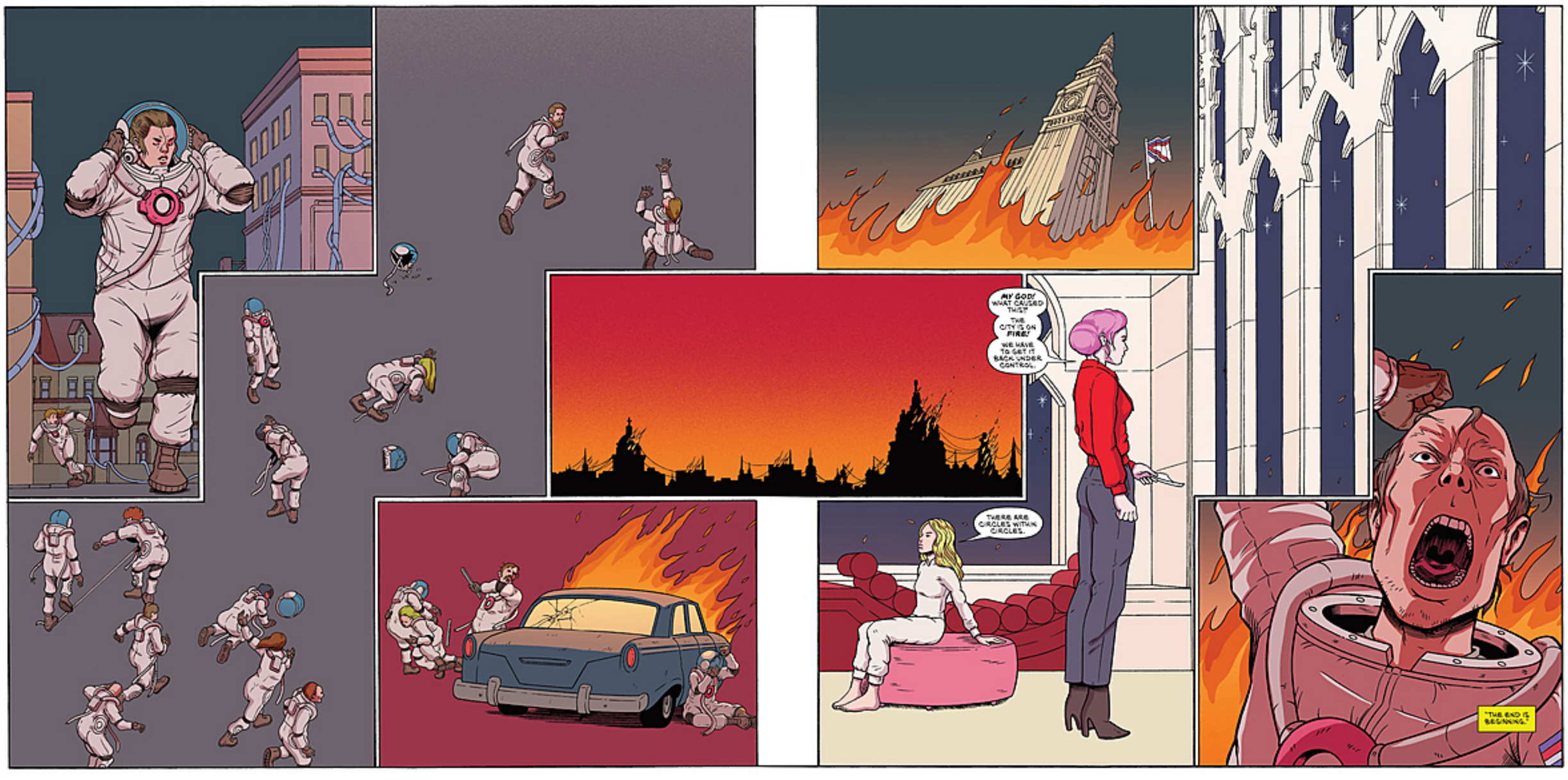
"SEE THAT, SON? SEE ALL THOSE LIGHTS ON THE MAP TURNING RED?

"THEY'RE GETTING THE MESSAGE.

"OUR LITTLE SCENE IS DRIVING THEM OUT OF THEIR GRID SUITS."


MMNNRRGHH...

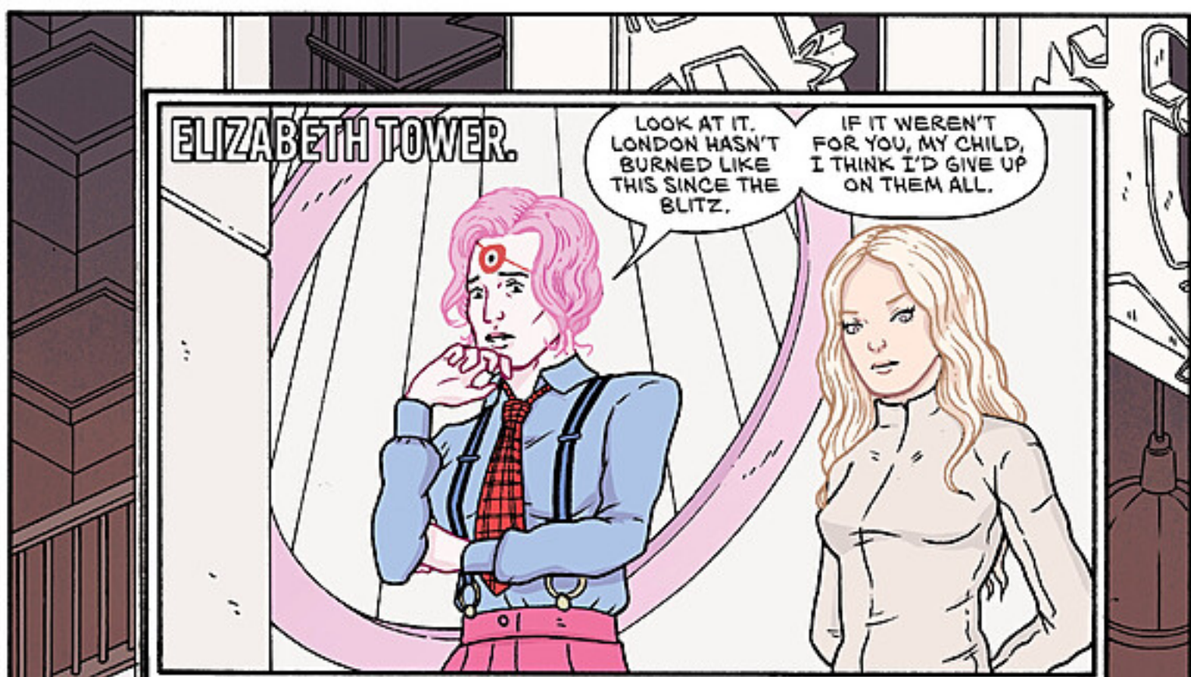

THERE'LL BE LOTS MORE LEAVING WHEN THEY REALISE THE SAME SCENE IS STARTING AGAIN AND THEY'RE STUCK IN A LOOP.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, I'D SAY.
YOU CAN GO NOW, SOFT LAD.
WE'RE DONE HERE.

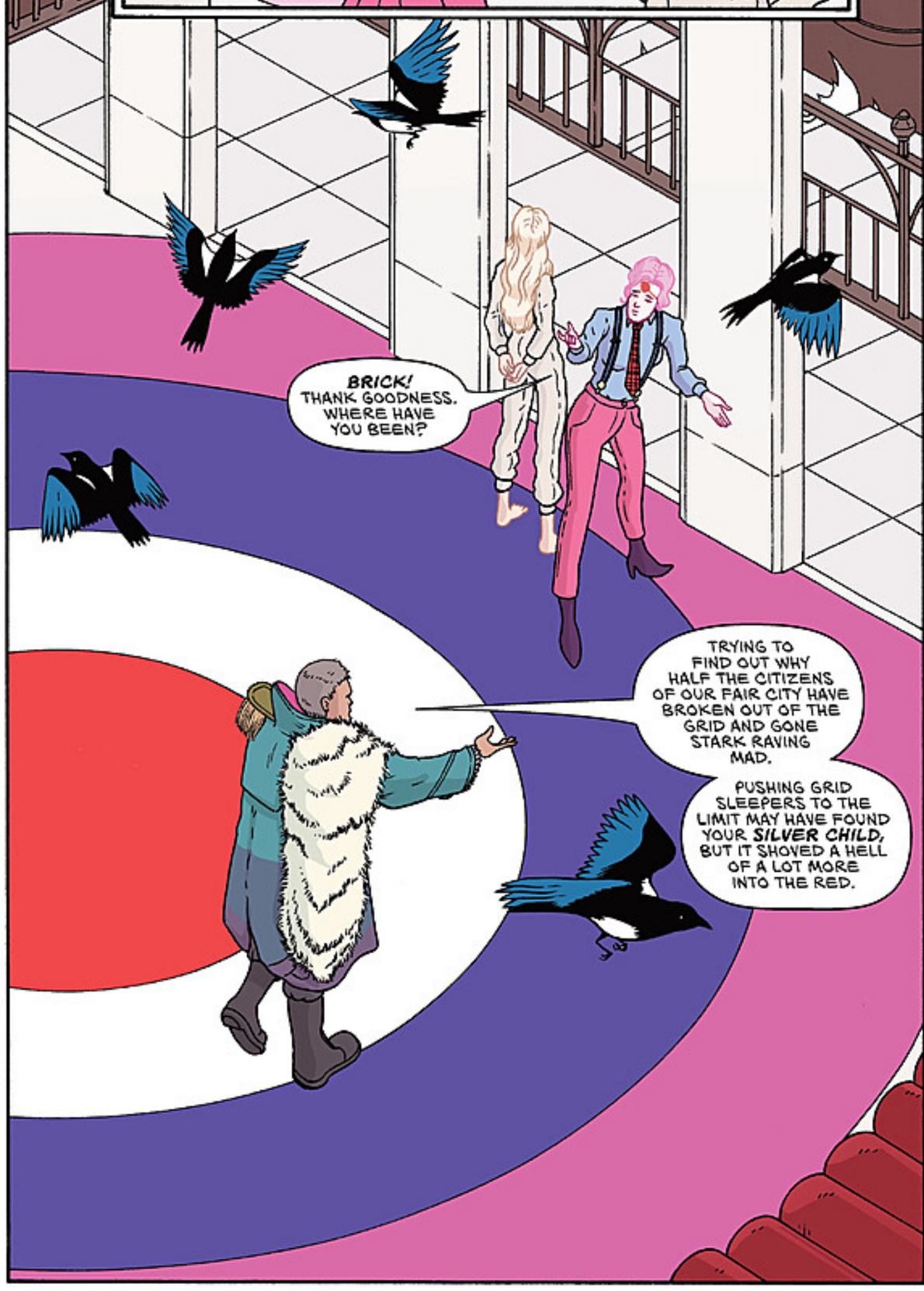

MY GOD! WHAT CAUSED THIS?
THE CITY IS ON FIRE!
WE HAVE TO GET IT BACK UNDER CONTROL.
THERE ARE CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES.
"THE END IS BEGINNING."

63

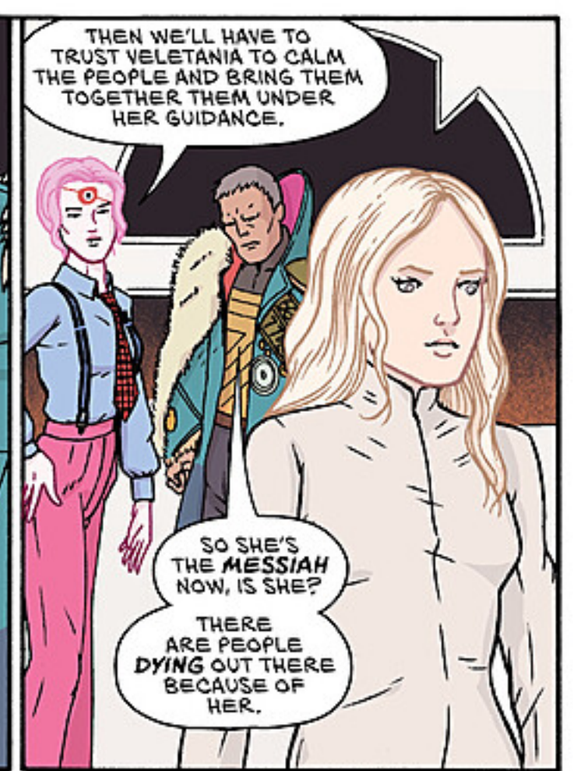
CHAPTER THREE

CANNOCK CHASE.
THERE ARE LIGHTS UP AHEAD. CAMPFIRES BY THE LOOK OF THEM.
HOW ABOUT THAT? MAYBE BOBBY WAS RIGHT AFTER ALL.
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
WE FOUND THE SLIP KIDS.
STAY INSIDE. WE WON'T BE LONG.
THAT THING LOOKS LIKE IT COULD SURVIVE A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION.
SHE CAN.
THIS IS MAXINE, OUR MOTORHOME AWAY FROM HOME.
WE'VE COME TO BRING YOU A MESSAGE FROM BOBBY. HE'S THE LEADER OF A MOVEMENT TO LIBERATE THE PEOPLE FROM GRID SLEEP AND GATHER EVERYONE IN A SAFE PLACE.
IN CASE YOU HADN'T NOTICED, WE'RE ALREADY FREE OF THE GRID.
THANKS FOR THE OFFER, BUT WE HAVE A SAFE PLACE...RIGHT HERE.
YOU CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS FOREVER. JUMBO HAS ABANDONED ANY IDEA OF REVIVING THE ECOSYSTEM.
LOOK AROUND YOU. THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS ARE BECOMING DEFORMED, THE AIR IS MORE POISONOUS EVERY DAY.
HEY, SOMEONE'S COMING!
WHO THE HELL ARE THEY?

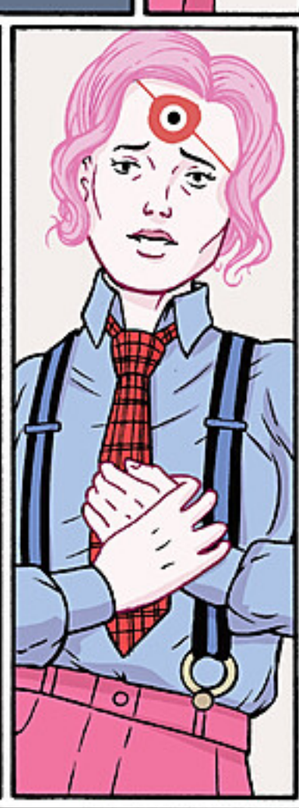

ELIZABETH TOWER.
LOOK AT IT. LONDON HASN'T BURNED LIKE THIS SINCE THE BLITZ.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, MY CHILD, I THINK I'D GIVE UP ON THEM ALL.


BRICK! THANK GOODNESS. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
TRYING TO FIND OUT WHY HALF THE CITIZENS OF OUR FAIR CITY HAVE BROKEN OUT OF THE GRID AND GONE STARK RAVING MAD.
PUSHING GRID SLEEPERS TO THE LIMIT MAY HAVE FOUND YOUR SILVER CHILD, BUT IT SHOVED A HELL OF A LOT MORE INTO THE RED.

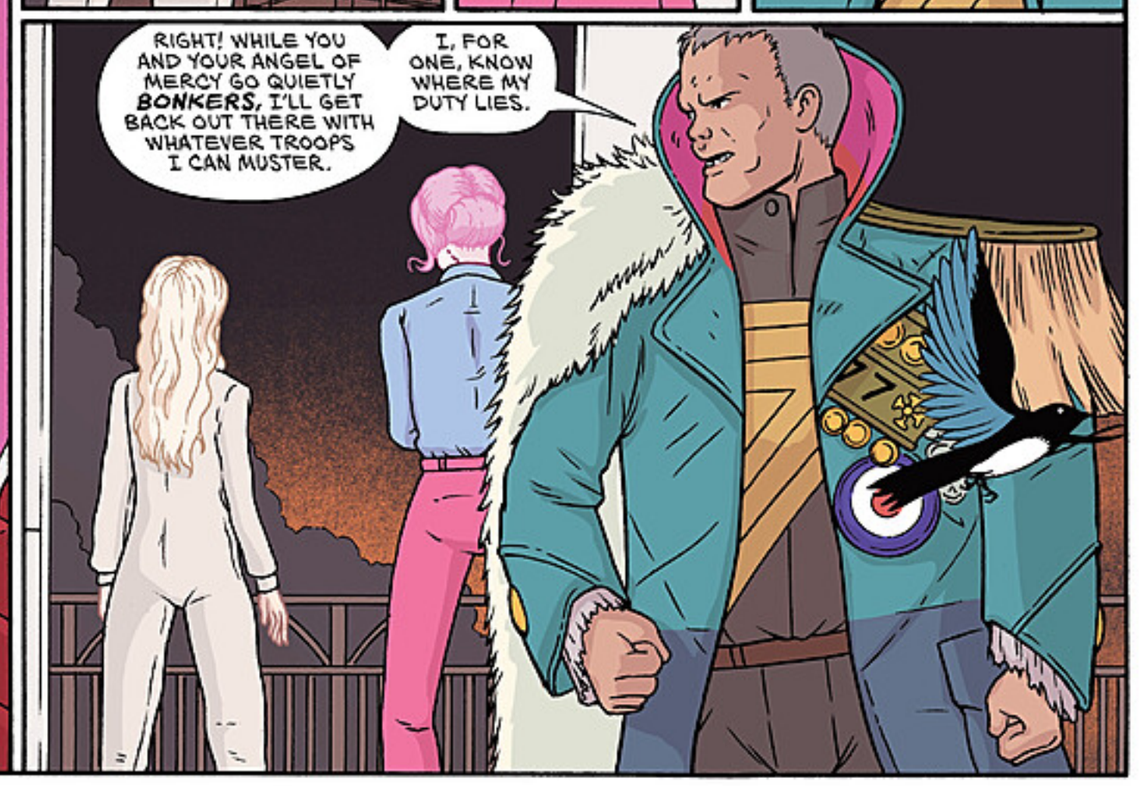
JUST GET THINGS UNDER CONTROL.
PUT MORE POLICE ONTO THE STREETS.
THERE ARE NO MORE.

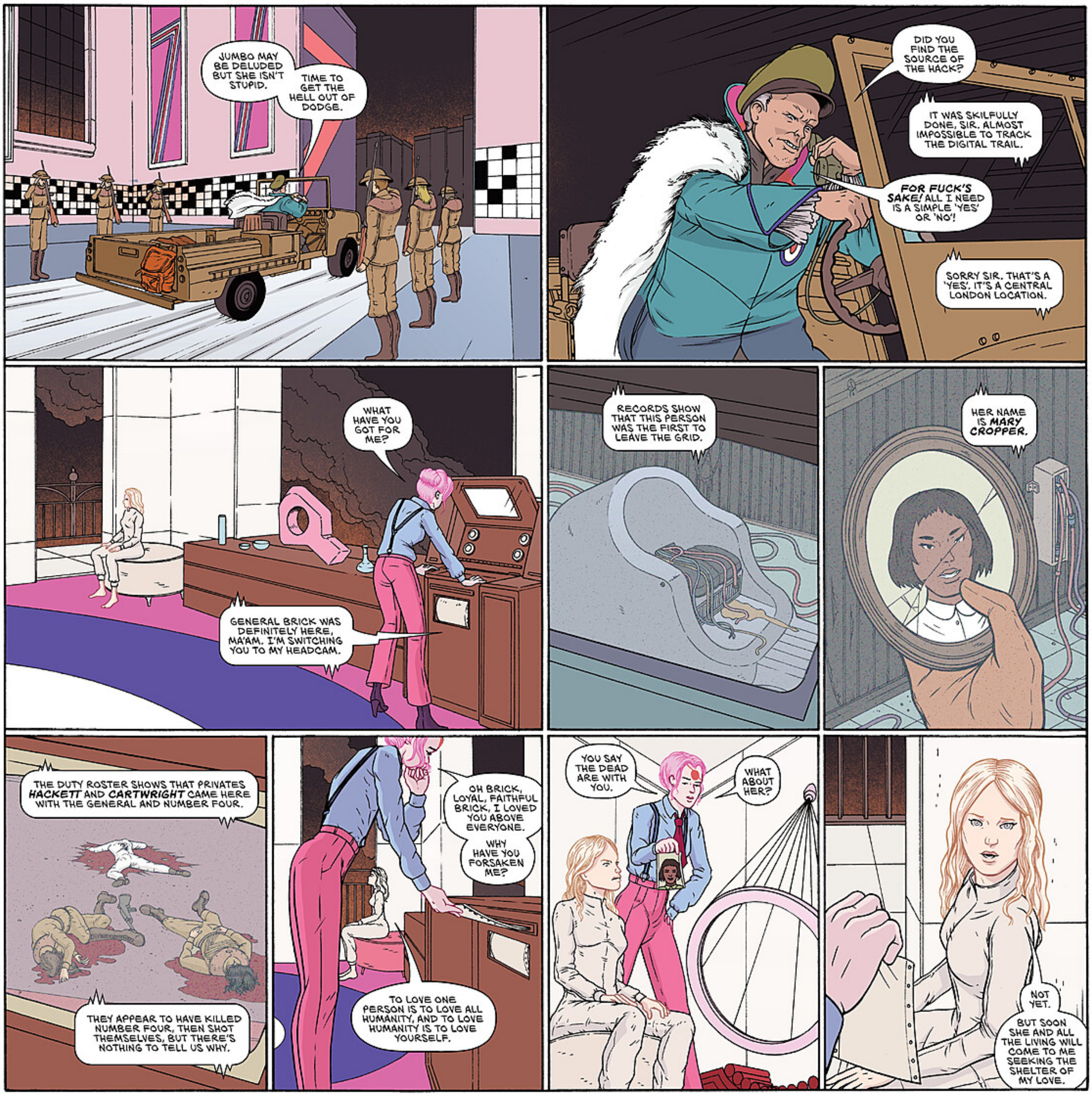

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO TRUST VELETANIA TO CALM THE PEOPLE AND BRING THEM TOGETHER THEM UNDER HER GUIDANCE.
SO SHE'S THE MESSIAH NOW, IS SHE?
THERE ARE PEOPLE DYING OUT THERE BECAUSE OF HER.

ALL WHO DIED ARE AT PEACE...
...BECAUSE THEY ARE AT ONE WITH ME.



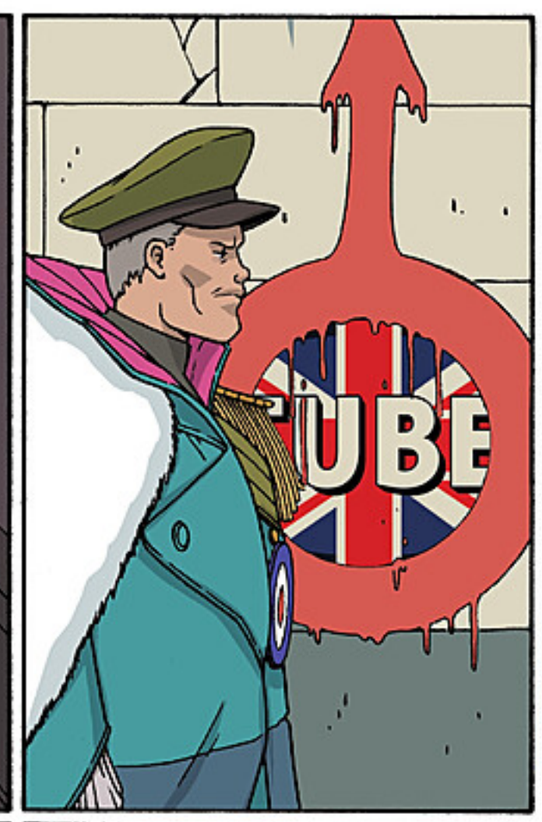
OH, MY SWEET AUNT FANNY.

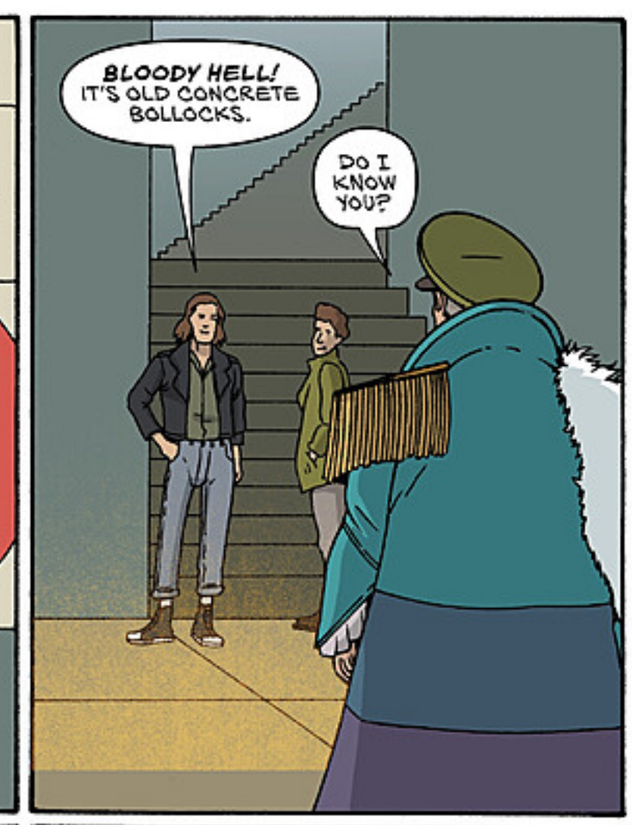

RIGHT! WHILE YOU AND YOUR ANGEL OF MERCY GO QUIETLY BONKERS, I'LL GET BACK OUT THERE WITH WHATEVER TROOPS I CAN MUSTER.
I, FOR ONE, KNOW WHERE MY DUTY LIES.


JUMBO MAY BE DELUDED BUT SHE ISN'T STUPID.
TIME TO GET THE HELL OUT OF DODGE.
DID YOU FIND THE SOURCE OF THE HACK?
IT WAS SKILFULLY DONE, SIR. ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO TRACK THE DIGITAL TRAIL.
FOR FUCK'S SAKE! ALL I NEED IS A SIMPLE 'YES' OR 'NO'!
SORRY SIR. THAT'S A 'YES'. IT'S A CENTRAL LONDON LOCATION.
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT FOR ME?
GENERAL BRICK WAS DEFINITELY HERE, MA'AM. I'M SWITCHING YOU TO MY HEADCAM.
RECORDS SHOW THAT THIS PERSON WAS THE FIRST TO LEAVE THE GRID.
HER NAME IS MARY CROPPER.
THE DUTY ROSTER SHOWS THAT PRIVATES HACKETT AND CARTWRIGHT CAME HERE WITH THE GENERAL AND NUMBER FOUR.
THEY APPEAR TO HAVE KILLED NUMBER FOUR, THEN SHOT THEMSELVES, BUT THERE'S NOTHING TO TELL US WHY.
OH BRICK, LOYAL, FAITHFUL BRICK, I LOVED YOU ABOVE EVERYONE.
WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?
TO LOVE ONE PERSON IS TO LOVE ALL HUMANITY, AND TO LOVE HUMANITY IS TO LOVE YOURSELF.
YOU SAY THE DEAD ARE WITH YOU.
WHAT ABOUT HER?
NOT YET.
BUT SOON SHE AND ALL THE LIVING WILL COME TO ME SEEKING THE SHELTER OF MY LOVE.

DAD! YOU NEED THIS!
QUICK, GIVE IT HERE. THEN GET BACK INSIDE!
THAT ONE'S GOING TO HURT MUM!
I--I NEVER KILLED ANYTHING BEFORE...
...NOT EVEN A RABBIT...NOT EVEN WHEN I WAS STARVING...
SO DO YOU STILL WANT TO STAY OUT HERE?
TELL BOBBY TO PUT THE KETTLE ON. HE'S GOING TO HAVE A FEW VISITORS.

TUBE
OXFORD CIRCUS


TUBE


BLOODY HELL! IT'S OLD CONCRETE BOLLOCKS.
DO I KNOW YOU?

EX-ARMY, SIR.
A DESERTER, ARE YOU?

SOD IT, WE'RE ALL DESERTERS NOW. PLUSBOND IS A SINKING SHIP.
TELL BOBOK I'M HERE.

BOBOK?
HE MEANS BOBBY. HE'S ON HIS WAY DOWN.

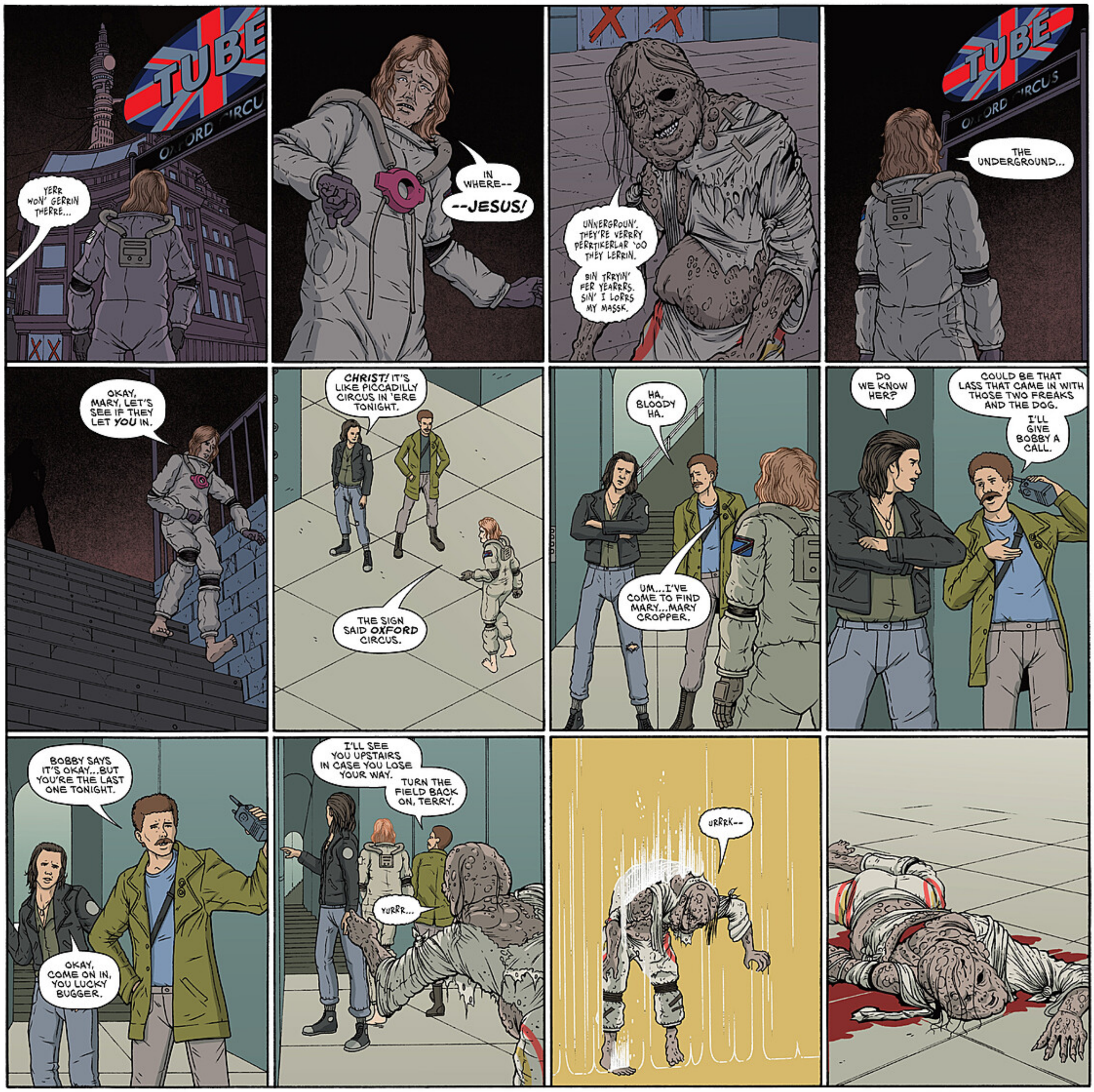
WELL, WELL, SO YOU FINALLY DECIDED TO JOIN US, BRICK, OR HAVE YOU COME TO ARREST US ALL?
I NEVER STOPPED WORKING FOR YOU, BOBOK.
IT WAS ME THAT SABOTAGED THE GRID.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE, HAVE YOU?
NOT A CLUE. WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME?

MUSIC, BRICK. EVERYONE HERE IS READY TO FIND THE ONE NOTE THAT REFLECTS THEIR NATURE.
AND WHEN THEY JOIN IN HARMONY, THE SOUND WILL SHATTER ALL ILLUSION, LEAVING NOTHING OF WHAT WE CALL REALITY.
NOTHING BUT THAT VIBRATION THAT REPRESENTS THE WHOLE OF UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

FUCK ME...

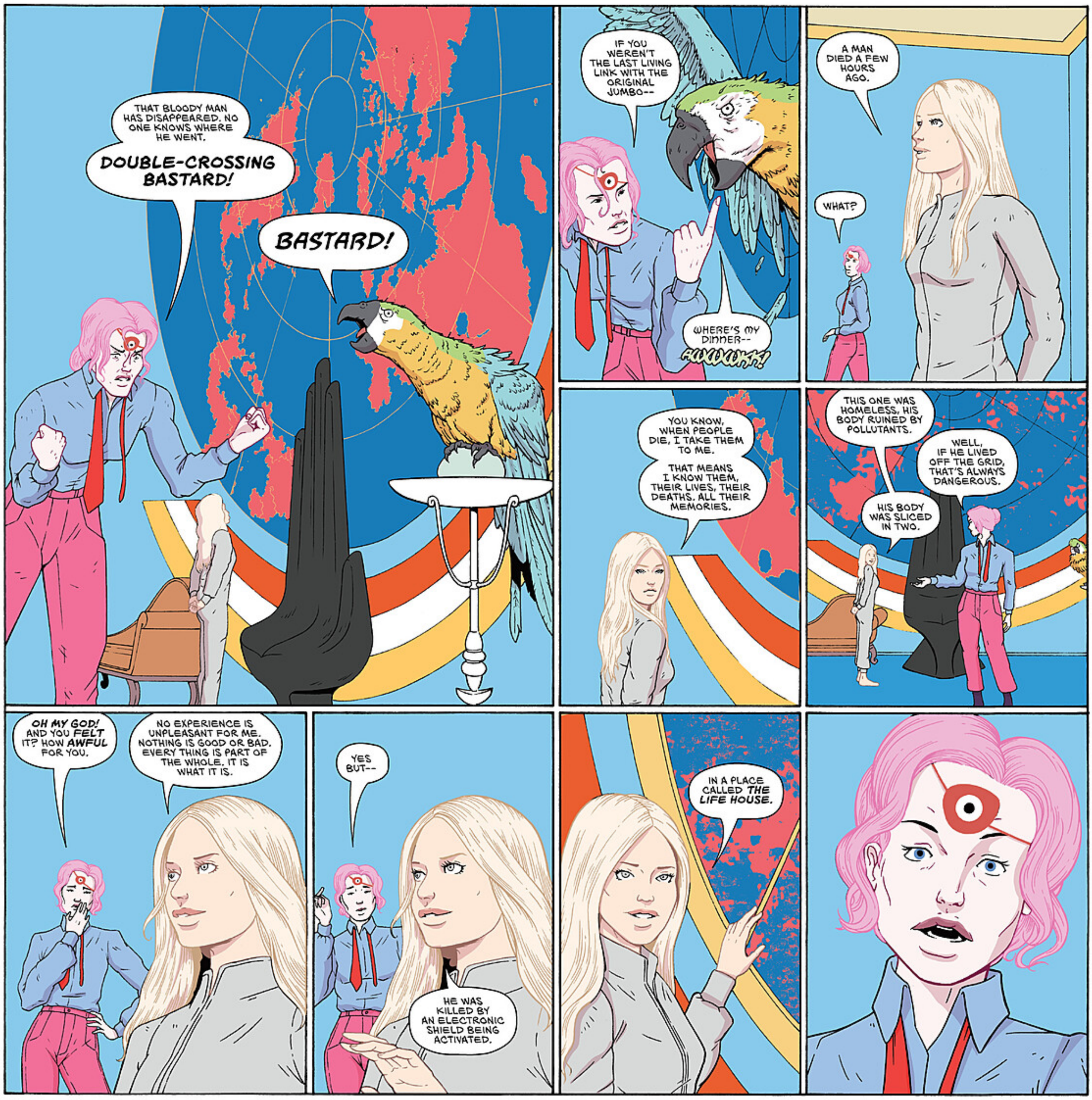
TURN OFF THE FORCE FIELD.
OH GOD, I'VE MISSED YOU!
YOU TALK SUCH TOTAL BOLLOCKS BUT I LOVE IT.
WE HAVE TAKEN VERY DIFFERENT PATHS.
NO, MATE, I WAS ALWAYS WITH YOU.
I ONLY STAYED WITH HER MAJESTY TO FUCK THINGS UP FROM THE INSIDE.
I SUPPOSE YOU COULD BE USEFUL.
WE'LL NEED TO PLUG IN TO THE GRID WHEN WE'RE READY TO SPREAD OUR SYMPHONY.
YEAH, NO PROBLEM. LET'S TALK.
I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW.
I'M WORKING WITH A VERY PROMISING RECRUIT.
I'LL ER...SEE YOU LATER THEN...
WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU GOBSHITES STARING AT?
SOMEONE WHO THINKS WE GIVE A TOSS THAT HE'S A GENERAL.
WE'RE ALL EQUALS HERE, EXCEPT BOBBY.
HE'S KIND OF FIRST AMONG EQUALS, BEING AS HE'S A GENIUS AN' THAT.

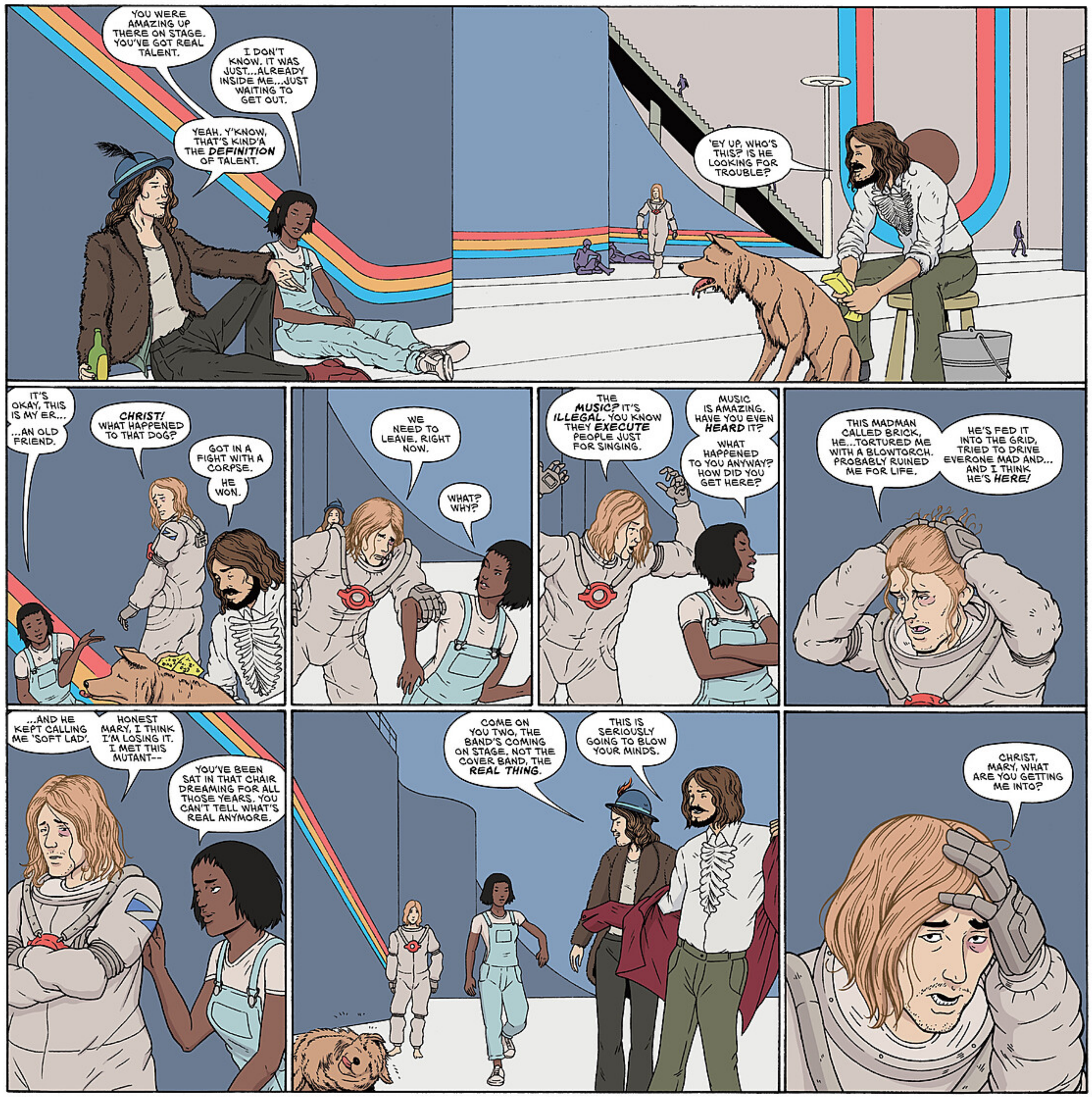

TUBE
OXFORD CIRCUS
YERR WON' GERRIN THERRE...
IN WHERE--
--JESUS!
UNNERGROUN'. THEY'RE VERRRY PERRTIKERLAR 'OO THEY LERRIN.
BIN TRYIN' FER YEARRS. SIN' I LORRS MY MASSK.
TUBE
OXFORD CIRCUS
THE UNDERGROUND...
OKAY, MARY, LET'S SEE IF THEY LET YOU IN.
CHRIST! IT'S LIKE PICCADILLY CIRCUS IN 'ERE TONIGHT.
THE SIGN SAID OXFORD CIRCUS.
HA, BLOODY HA.
UM...I'VE COME TO FIND MARY...MARY CROPPER.
DO WE KNOW HER?
COULD BE THAT LASS THAT CAME IN WITH THOSE TWO FREAKS AND THE DOG.
I'LL GIVE BOBBY A CALL.
BOBBY SAYS IT'S OKAY...BUT YOU'RE THE LAST ONE TONIGHT.
OKAY, COME ON IN, YOU LUCKY BUGGER.
I'LL SEE YOU UPSTAIRS IN CASE YOU LOSE YOUR WAY.
TURN THE FIELD BACK ON, TERRY.
YURRR...
URRRK--

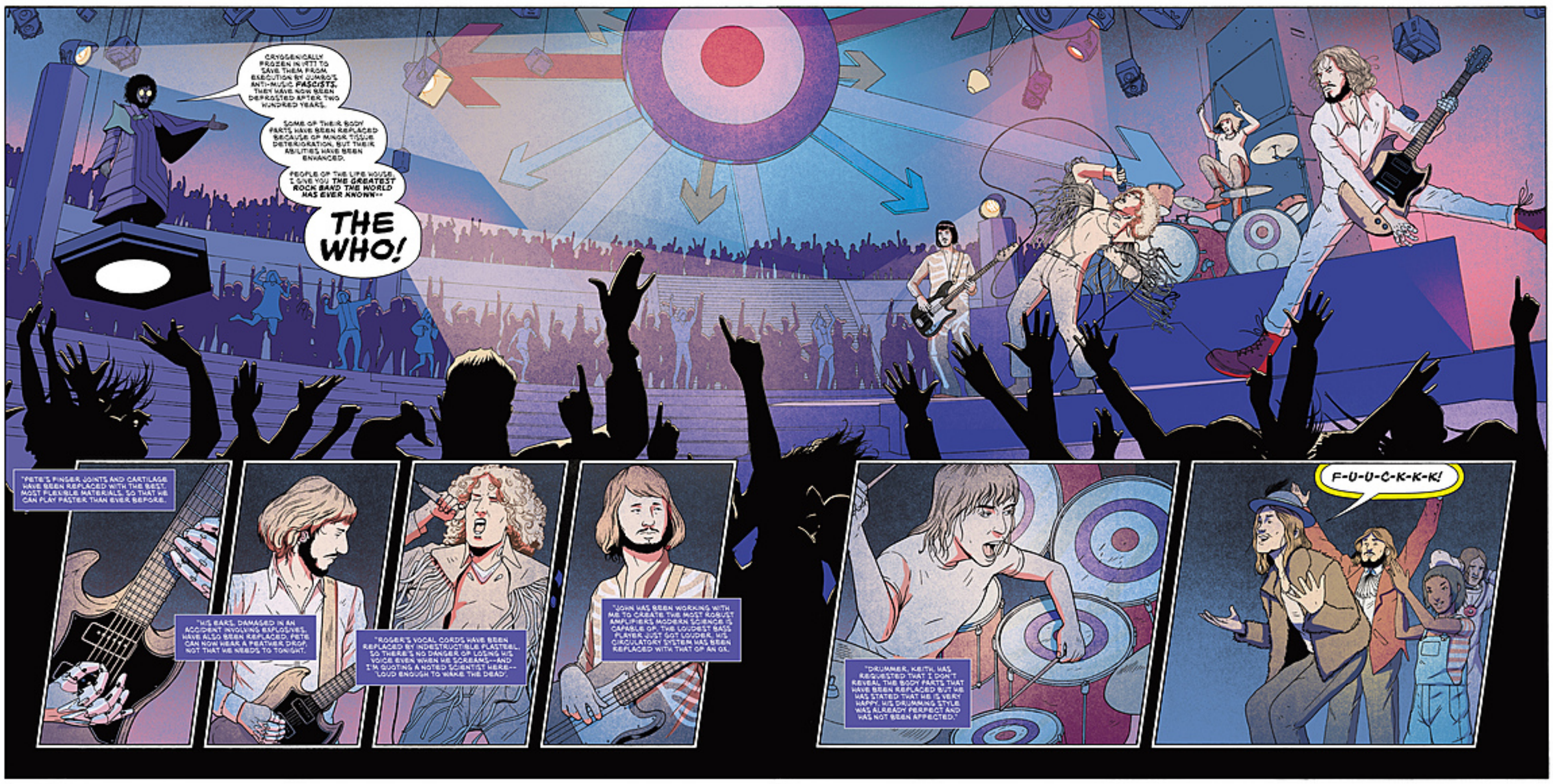
THE TRICK TO PLAYING MUSIC IS TO LISTEN FIRST. YOU CAN'T PLAY IT UNTIL YOU HEAR IT.
EVERYTHING... LIGHT...AIR...OUR BODIES...THIS KEYBOARD...IT'S ALL JUST PARTICLES VIBRATING.
THAT'S THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES.
LIKE THE MUSIC I HEARD IN THE RIVER.
YES, WATER IS A NATURAL MEDIUM FOR MUSIC.
TRY PLAYING WHAT YOU HEARD.
MUSIC IS THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF THE UNIVERSE.
THE END?
YES. IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD... A SOUND...AND WITH THAT SOUND THE UNIVERSE BECAME SELF-AWARE AND THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES BEGAN.
BUT THE WORLD IS FULL OF DISCORDS, DEAD MUSIC.
WHEN WE LEARN TO CREATE THE PERFECT HARMONY, WE WILL ALL RETURN TO THE STATE OF ONE SINGLE CONSCIOUSNESS...
...WHAT SOME PEOPLE CALLED NIRVANA.
UM...THAT BRICK PERSON SAYS HE REALLY NEEDS TO TALK TO YOU, AND THE OTHER ONE, DAVE, WANTS TO SEE HER.
SAYS HE'S HER BOYFRIEND.
HE'S NOT MY BOYFRIEND.
IT'S ALL RIGHT, PENNY, JUST LET THEM WANDER AROUND A BIT. WE'RE WORKING.
I WAS GETTING PRETTY GOOD ON THE PIANO, WASN'T I BOBBY?
HMMM?
OH, YEAH...NOT BAD.

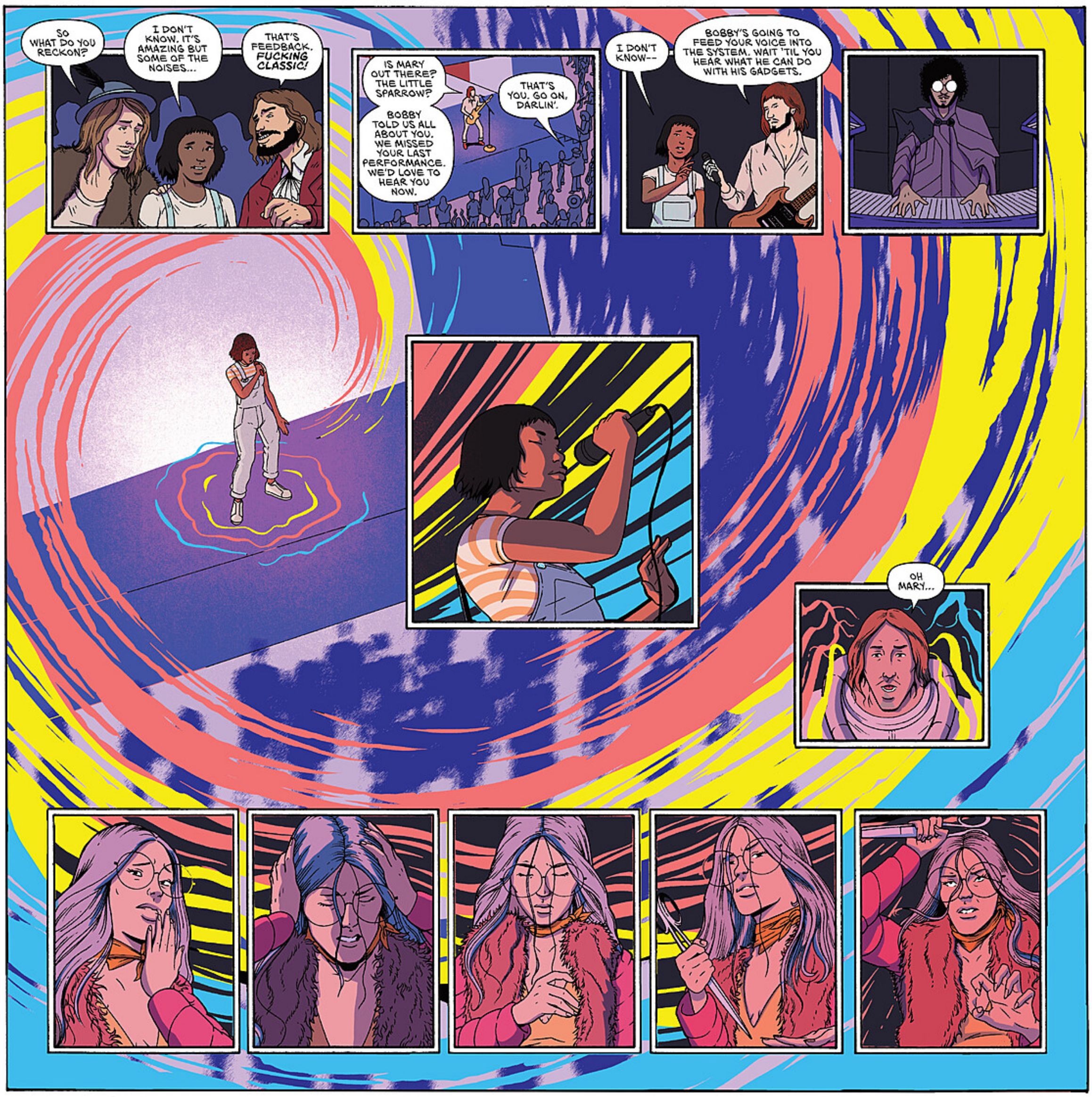
WAS DAVE SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO YOU?
I SUPPOSE SO. ONCE.
WE DIDN'T EXACTLY HAVE A SHARED LIFE.
HE WAS IN HIS SUIT, I WAS IN MINE.
LIVING OUR DREAMS...OR NIGHTMARES.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT.
NOT YOUR FAULT.
ACTUALLY, IT WAS.
I SPENT YEARS HACKING INTO THE GRID, LOOKING FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL.
I FOUND YOU.
I HAD TO BREAK YOU OUT. TO DO THAT, I HAD TO MAKE YOU FEEL TRAPPED...
...REALLY TRAPPED.
YOU MEAN IT WAS YOU THAT FED ME THAT NIGHTMARE?
A CYCLE OF BEING IMPRISONED FOR SOME IMAGINED CRIME.
IT WAS THE ONLY WAY.
DO YOU REALISE WHAT THAT WAS LIKE FOR ME?
IF I HAD BEEN WRONG, YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE BROKEN OUT. YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE NOW.
SO THAT MAKES IT OKAY?
I'M SORRY I MADE YOU GO THROUGH THAT.
ENLIGHTENMENT ISN'T EASY. I'M AFRAID A BIT OF SUFFERING GOES WITH THE TERRITORY.

HONESTLY, BRICK. I'M GLAD YOU'VE JOINED US. IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE SO MUCH ON MY PLATE RIGHT NOW.
THE CONCERT. I HEARD.
IT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN WORKING TOWARDS, WHAT THE GRID WAS MEANT TO BE.
I KNEW IT! YOU HAD IT ALL PLANNED FROM THE START, YOU CHEEKY BUGGER.
I WOULDN'T CALL IT A PLAN EXACTLY.
IT'S MORE LIKE I SAW THE BIG PICTURE...HEARD IT IN MY HEAD...THE MUSIC BEHIND THE NOISE.
THERE'S A PATTERN IN EVERTHING, EVEN IN THE CHAOS.
MATE, YOU'RE MAKING MY HEAD HURT.
DON'T WORRY, BRICK. YOU HAVE YOUR PLACE IN ALL THIS TOO. YOU'RE PART OF THE MUSIC.
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ME SING?
I HAVE TO GET BACK.
THING IS, SOMETHING'S HAPPENED.
JUMBO IS GETTING PROPER WEIRD ABOUT THIS GIRL SHE PULLED OFF THE GRID. VELETANIA.
JUMBO SAYS SHE'S A SILVER SUIT.
SILVER SUIT?! ARE YOU SURE--?
SEEMS TO THINK SHE'S SOME KIND OF MESSIAH. I THINK SHE'S DANGEROUS.
AH.
SERIOUSLY. IF I FOUND YOU, JUMBO WILL TOO AND THIS VELETANIA--
WHAT ON EARTH HAS THAT DOG BEEN EATING?

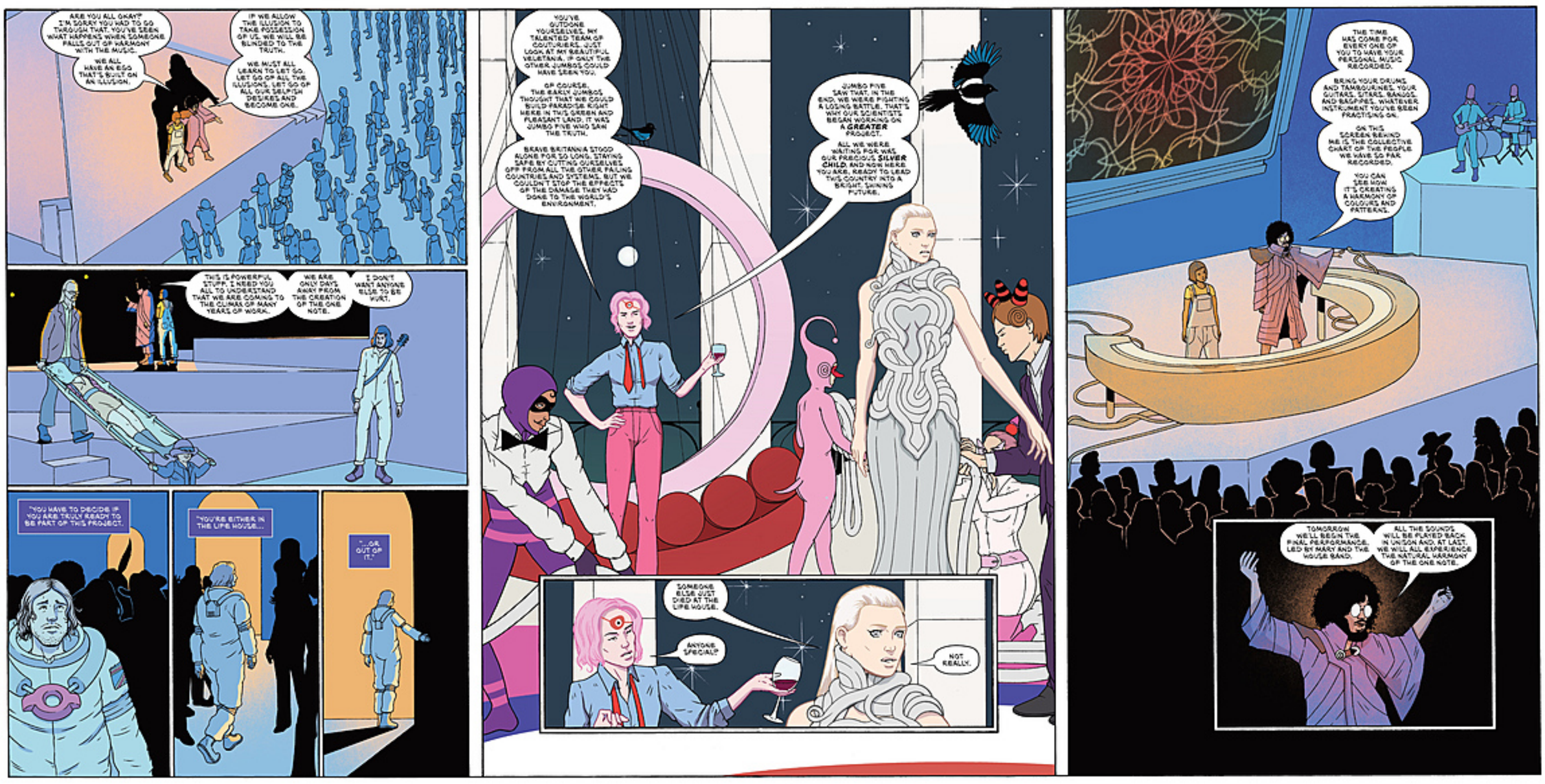

THAT BLOODY MAN HAS DISAPPEARED. NO ONE KNOWS WHERE HE WENT.
DOUBLE-CROSSING BASTARD!
BASTARD!
IF YOU WEREN'T THE LAST LIVING LINK WITH THE ORIGINAL JUMBO--
WHERE'S MY DINNER--
KKKKKKK!
A MAN DIED A FEW HOURS AGO.
WHAT?
YOU KNOW, WHEN PEOPLE DIE, I TAKE THEM TO ME.
THAT MEANS I KNOW THEM, THEIR LIVES, THEIR DEATHS, ALL THEIR MEMORIES.
THIS ONE WAS HOMELESS, HIS BODY RUINED BY POLLUTANTS.
WELL, IF HE LIVED OFF THE GRID, THAT'S ALWAYS DANGEROUS.
HIS BODY WAS SLICED IN TWO.
OH MY GOD! AND YOU FELT IT? HOW AWFUL FOR YOU.
NO EXPERIENCE IS UNPLEASANT FOR ME. NOTHING IS GOOD OR BAD. EVERY THING IS PART OF THE WHOLE. IT IS WHAT IT IS.
YES BUT--
HE WAS KILLED BY AN ELECTRONIC SHIELD BEING ACTIVATED.
IN A PLACE CALLED THE LIFE HOUSE.


YOU WERE AMAZING UP THERE ON STAGE. YOU'VE GOT REAL TALENT.
I DON'T KNOW. IT WAS JUST...ALREADY INSIDE ME...JUST WAITING TO GET OUT.
YEAH. Y'KNOW, THAT'S KIND'A THE DEFINITION OF TALENT.
'EY UP, WHO'S THIS? IS HE LOOKING FOR TROUBLE?
IT'S OKAY, THIS IS MY ER...
...AN OLD FRIEND.
CHRIST! WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT DOG?
GOT IN A FIGHT WITH A CORPSE.
HE WON.
WE NEED TO LEAVE, RIGHT NOW.
WHAT? WHY?
THE MUSIC? IT'S ILLEGAL. YOU KNOW THEY EXECUTE PEOPLE JUST FOR SINGING.
MUSIC IS AMAZING. HAVE YOU EVEN HEARD IT?
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU ANYWAY? HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
THIS MADMAN CALLED BRICK, HE...TORTURED ME WITH A BLOWTORCH. PROBABLY RUINED ME FOR LIFE.
HE'S FED IT INTO THE GRID, TRIED TO DRIVE EVERONE MAD AND... AND I THINK HE'S HERE!
...AND HE KEPT CALLING ME 'SOFT LAD'.
HONEST MARY, I THINK I'M LOSING IT. I MET THIS MUTANT--
YOU'VE BEEN SAT IN THAT CHAIR DREAMING FOR ALL THOSE YEARS. YOU CAN'T TELL WHAT'S REAL ANYMORE.
COME ON YOU TWO, THE BAND'S COMING ON STAGE. NOT THE COVER BAND, THE REAL THING.
THIS IS SERIOUSLY GOING TO BLOW YOUR MINDS.
CHRIST, MARY, WHAT ARE YOU GETTING ME INTO?


CRYOGENICALLY FROZEN IN 1971 TO SAVE THEM FROM EXECUTION BY JUMBO'S ANTI-MUSIC FASCISTS. THEY WERE NOW BEEN DEFROSTED AFTER TWO HUNDRED YEARS.
SOME OF THEIR BODY PARTS HAVE BEEN REPLACED BECAUSE OF MINOR TISSUE DETERIORATION, BUT THEIR ABILITIES HAVE BEEN ENHANCED.
PEOPLE OF THE LIFE HOUSE, I GIVE YOU THE GREATEST ROCK BAND THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN--
THE WHO!
"PETE'S FINGER JOINTS AND CARTILAGE HAVE BEEN REPLACED WITH THE BEST, MOST FLEXIBLE MATERIALS, SO THAT HE CAN PLAY FASTER THAN EVER BEFORE.
"HIS EARS, DAMAGED IN AN ACCIDENT INVOLVING EXPLOSIVES, HAVE ALSO BEEN REPLACED. PETE CAN NOW HEAR A FEATHER DROP, NOT THAT HE NEEDS TO TONIGHT.
"ROGER'S VOCAL CORDS HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY INDESTRUCTIBLE PLASTEEL, SO THERE'S NO DANGER OF LOSING HIS VOICE EVEN WHEN HE SCREAMS--AND I'M QUOTING A NOTED SCIENTIST HERE--'LOUD ENOUGH TO WAKE THE DEAD.'
"JOHN HAS BEEN WORKING WITH ME TO CREATE THE MOST ROBUST AMPLIFIERS MODERN SCIENCE IS CAPABLE OF. THE LOUDEST BASS PLAYER JUST GOT LOUDER. HIS CIRCULATORY SYSTEM HAS BEEN REPLACED WITH THAT OF AN OX.
"DRUMMER, KEITH, HAS REQUESTED THAT I DON'T REVEAL THE BODY PARTS THAT HAVE BEEN REPLACED BUT HE HAS STATED THAT HE IS VERY HAPPY. HIS DRUMMING STYLE WAS ALREADY PERFECT AND HAS NOT BEEN AFFECTED.'
F-U-U-C-K-K-K!

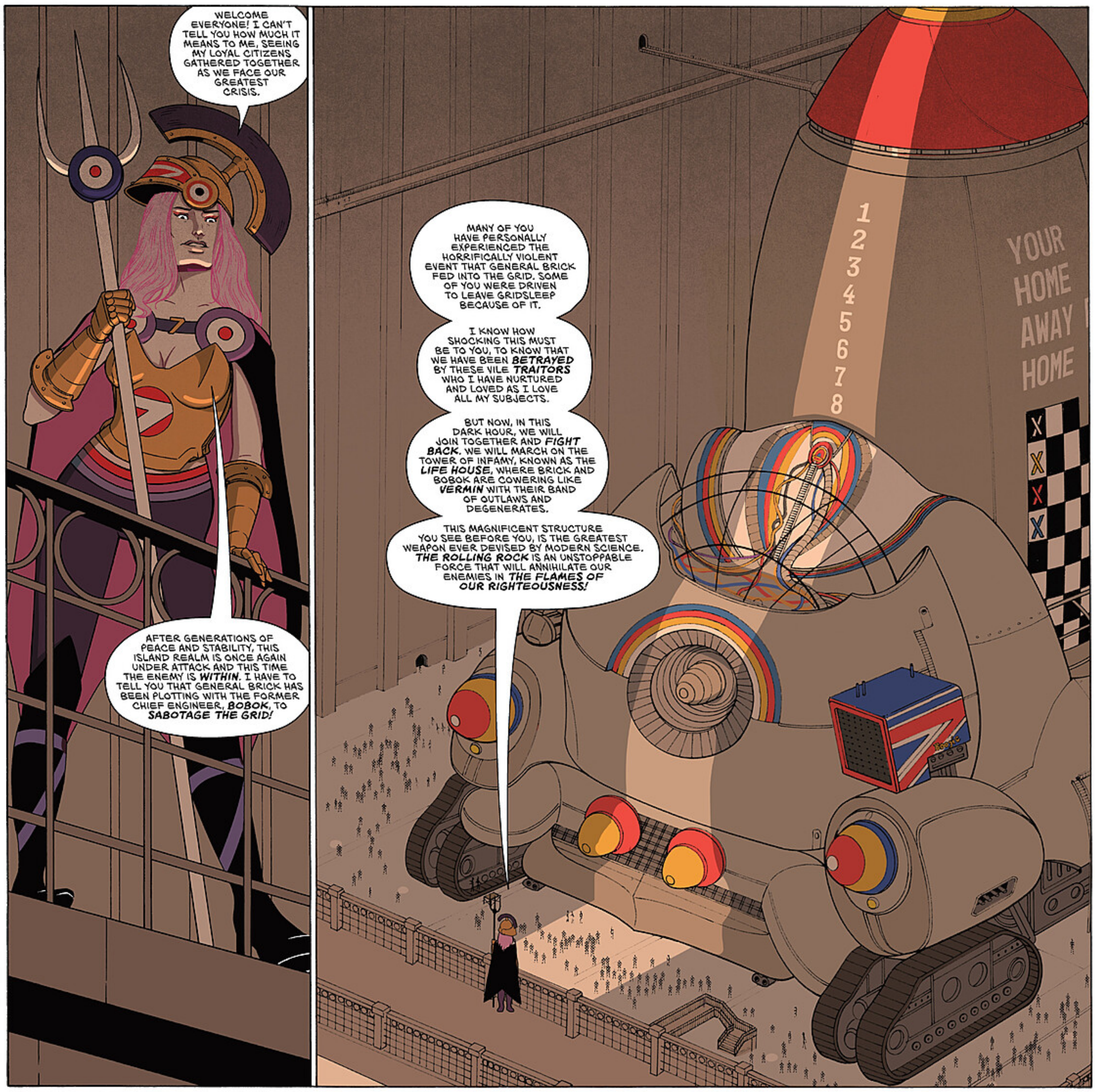

SO WHAT DO YOU RECKON?
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S AMAZING BUT SOME OF THE NOISES...
THAT'S FEEDBACK. FUCKING CLASSIC!
IS MARY OUT THERE? THE LITTLE SPARROW?
BOBBY TOLD US ALL ABOUT YOU. WE MISSED YOUR LAST PERFORMANCE. WE'D LOVE TO HEAR YOU NOW.
THAT'S YOU. GO ON, DARLIN'.
I DON'T KNOW--
BOBBY'S GOING TO FEED YOUR VOICE INTO THE SYSTEM. WAIT 'TIL YOU HEAR WHAT HE CAN DO WITH HIS GADGETS.
OH MARY...

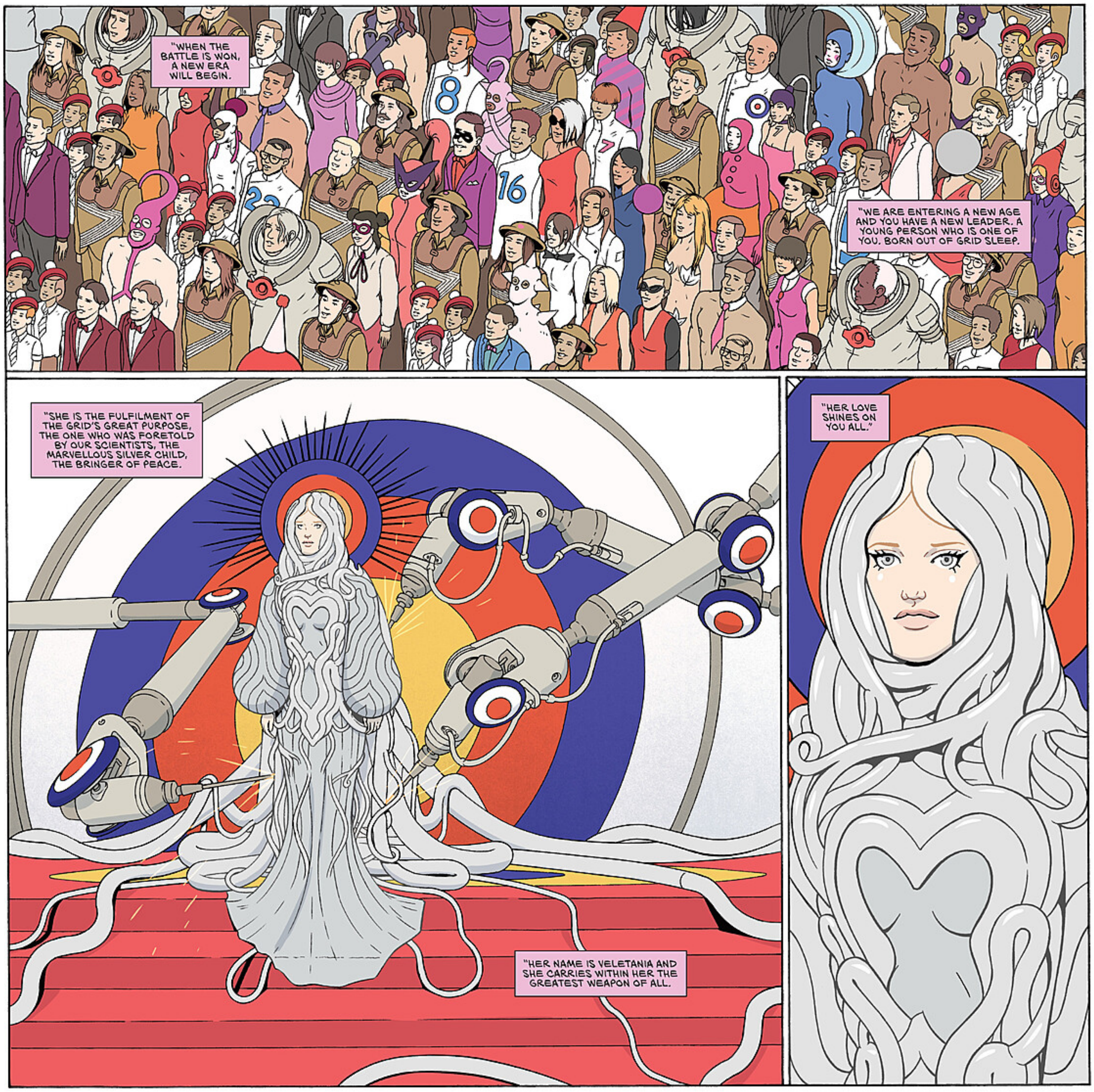
MARY, IT'S OKAY. YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
I HEARD HER IN MY HEAD. SHE FELT SO LONELY, SHUT OUT.
IT MADE HER HATE ME.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. PENNY WASN'T READY FOR THIS.
I SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT. HER NOTE WAS A DISCORD, HER MUSIC WAS FULL OF EGO, VANITY, ENVY...
BUT IT WAS MY FAULT...
MY VOICE...

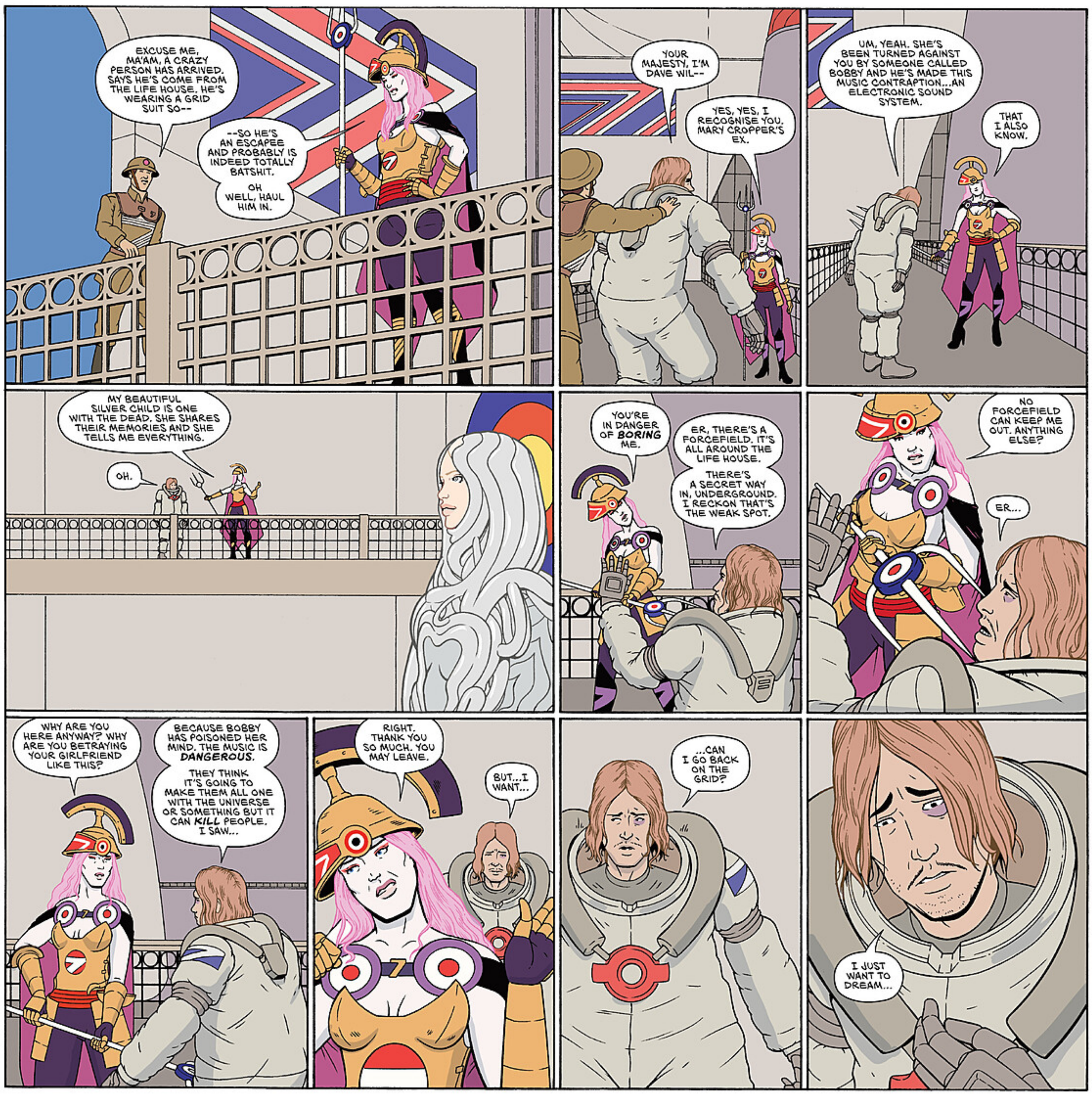

ARE YOU ALL OKAY? I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO GO THROUGH THAT. YOU'VE SEEN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE FALLS OUT OF HARMONY WITH THE MUSIC.
WE ALL HAVE AN EGO THAT'S BUILT ON AN ILLUSION.
IF WE ALLOW THE ILLUSION TO TAKE POSSESSION OF US, WE WILL BE BLINDED TO THE TRUTH.
WE MUST ALL LEARN TO LET GO. LET GO OF ALL THE ILLUSIONS. LET GO OF ALL OUR SELFISH DESIRES AND BECOME ONE.
THIS IS POWERFUL STUFF. I NEED YOU ALL TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE COMING TO THE CLIMAX OF MANY YEARS OF WORK.
WE ARE ONLY DAYS AWAY FROM THE CREATION OF THE ONE NOTE.
I DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE TO BE HURT.
"YOU HAVE TO DECIDE IF YOU ARE TRULY READY TO BE PART OF THIS PROJECT.
"YOU'RE EITHER IN THE LIFE HOUSE...
"...OR OUT OF IT."
YOU'VE OUTDONE YOURSELVES. MY TALENTED TEAM OF COUTURIERS. JUST LOOK AT MY BEAUTIFUL VELUTANIA. IF ONLY THE OTHER JUMBOS COULD HAVE SEEN YOU.
OF COURSE. THE EARLY JUMBOS THOUGHT THAT WE COULD BUILD PARADISE RIGHT HERE IN THIS GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND. IT WAS JUMBO FIVE WHO SAW THE TRUTH.
BRAVE BRITANNIA STOOD ALONE FOR SO LONG, STAYING SAFE BY CUTTING OURSELVES OFF FROM ALL THE OTHER FAILING COUNTRIES AND SYSTEMS. BUT WE COULDN'T STOP THE EFFECTS OF THE DAMAGE THEY HAD DONE TO THE WORLD'S ENVIRONMENT.
JUMBO FIVE SAW THAT, IN THE END, WE WERE FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE. THAT'S WHY OUR SCIENTISTS BEGAN WORKING ON A GREATER PROJECT.
ALL WE WERE WAITING FOR WAS OUR PRECIOUS SILVER CHILD, AND NOW HERE YOU ARE, READY TO LEAD THIS COUNTRY INTO A BRIGHT, SHINING FUTURE.
SOMEONE ELSE JUST DIED AT THE LIFE HOUSE.
ANYONE SPECIAL?
NOT REALLY.
THE TIME HAS COME FOR EVERY ONE OF YOU TO HAVE YOUR PERSONAL MUSIC RECORDED.
BRING YOUR DRUMS AND TAMBOURINES, YOUR GUITARS, SITARS, BANJOS, AND BAGPIPES. WHATEVER INSTRUMENT YOU'VE BEEN PRACTISING ON.
ON THIS SCREEN BEHIND ME IS THE COLLECTIVE CHART OF THE PEOPLE WE HAVE SO FAR RECORDED.
YOU CAN SEE HOW IT'S CREATING A HARMONY OF COLOURS AND PATTERNS.
TOMORROW WE'LL BEGIN THE FINAL PERFORMANCE, LED BY MARY AND THE HOUSE BAND.
ALL THE SOUNDS WILL BE PLAYED BACK IN UNISON AND, AT LAST, WE WILL ALL EXPERIENCE THE NATURAL HARMONY OF THE ONE NOTE.

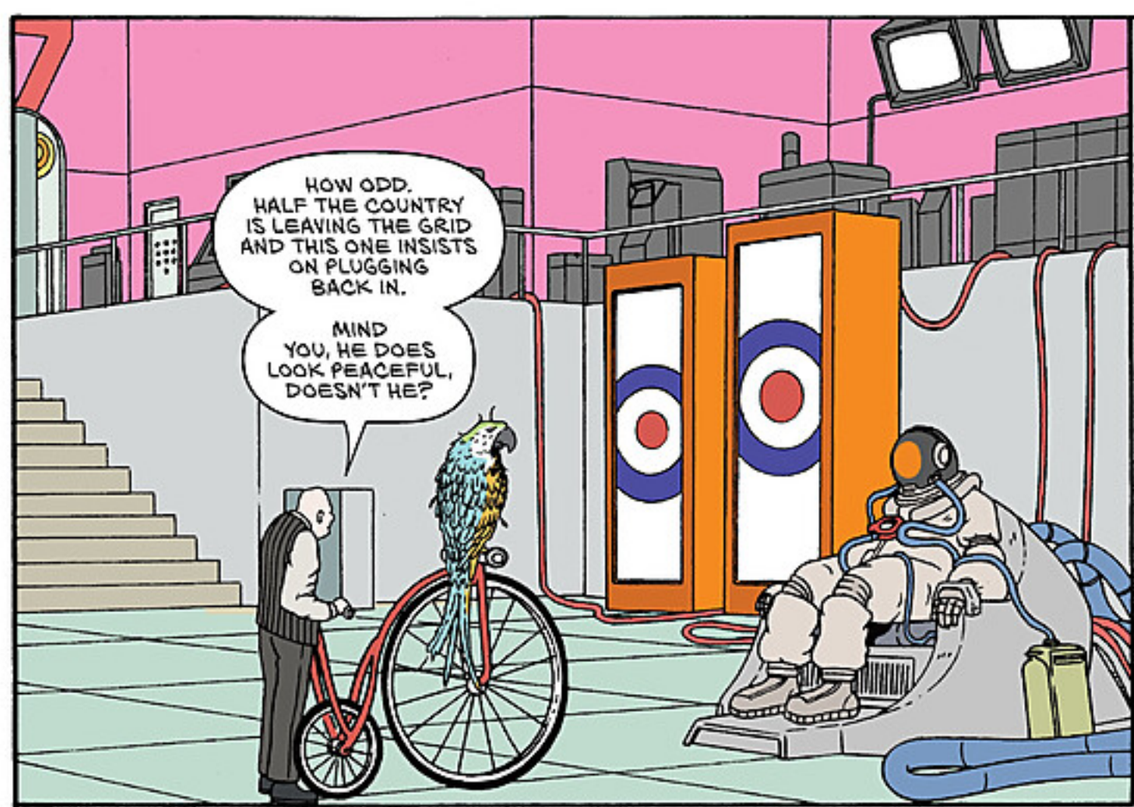
SALLY, HOW CLOSE ARE YOU?
WE'RE A FEW HOURS FROM LONDON. IT DEPENDS HOW CLOGGED UP THE ROADS ARE.
IT'S A MESS OUT HERE AND IT GETS WORSE THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE CITY.
I REALLY NEED YOU AND THE SLIP KIDS INSIDE THE LIFE HOUSE BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE ENDS TOMORROW.
AFTER THAT, IT WON'T MATTER. NOTHING WILL MATTER.
YOU'RE THE BEST OF US. YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?
EVERYTHING OKAY?
DO YOU THINK WE CAN GO ANY FASTER?
DAVE, PLEASE STAY. YOU SHOULD BE PART OF THIS.
I'M NOT THOUGH, AM I? NO MORE THAN THAT POOR WOMAN.
YOU AND ME...WE'RE NOT THE SAME. I CAN'T DO THIS.
HE'S MAD. YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?
MUSIC CAN'T SAVE YOU.
TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELF.

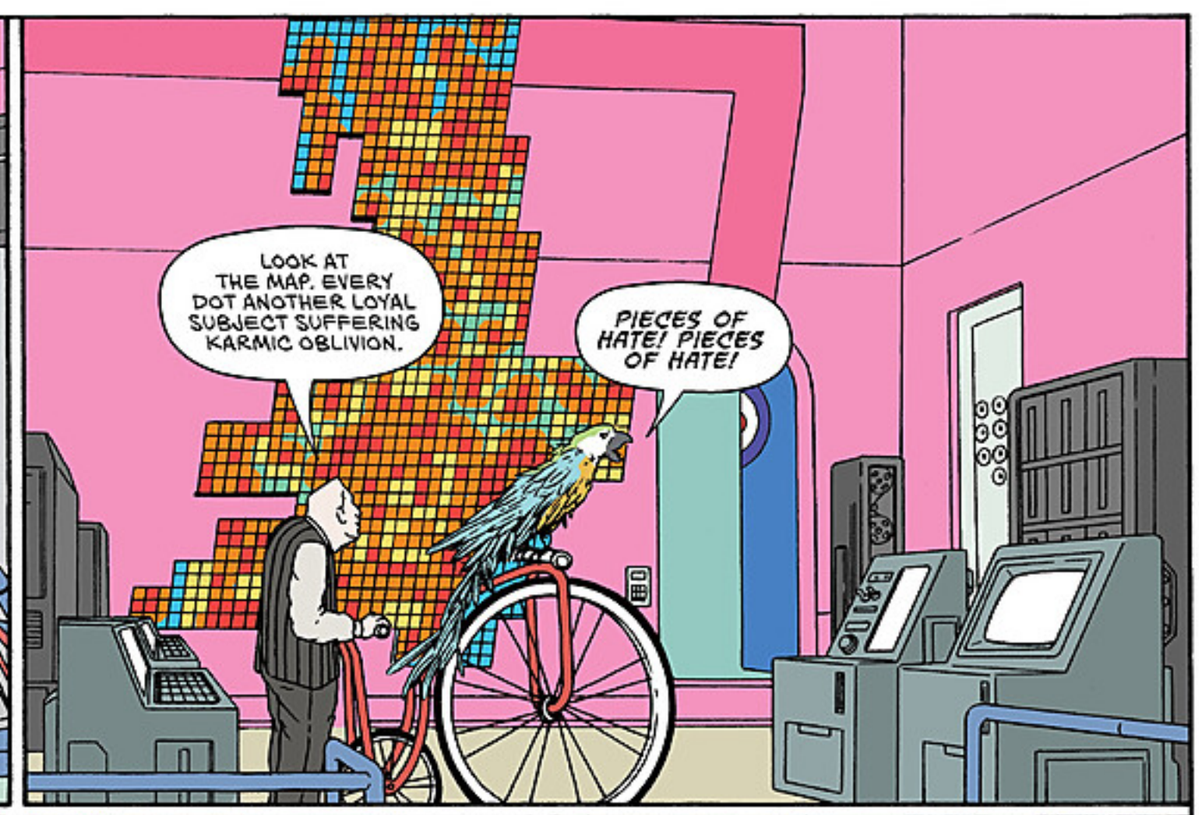
MOVE IT UP, GUYS. WE HAVE TO HAVE ALL THE ANALOGUE TAPES LOADED INTO THE SYSTEM BY TOMORROW MORNING.
OY, SOFT LAD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?
UNNFFF!
DON'T...
...CALL ME...
...SOFT LAD!
ALL RIGHT, SON, WELL DONE.
YOU'RE A HARD MAN NOW.
OPEN THE BARRIER!
I'M SORRY. I CAN'T DO THAT.
BLAM!
OPEN THE FUCKING BARRIER!
RIGHT YOU ARE, THEN.
GOOD RIDDANCE, IF YOU ASK ME.
SHAME ABOUT THE MONKEY, THOUGH. I WAS QUITE FOND OF HIM.

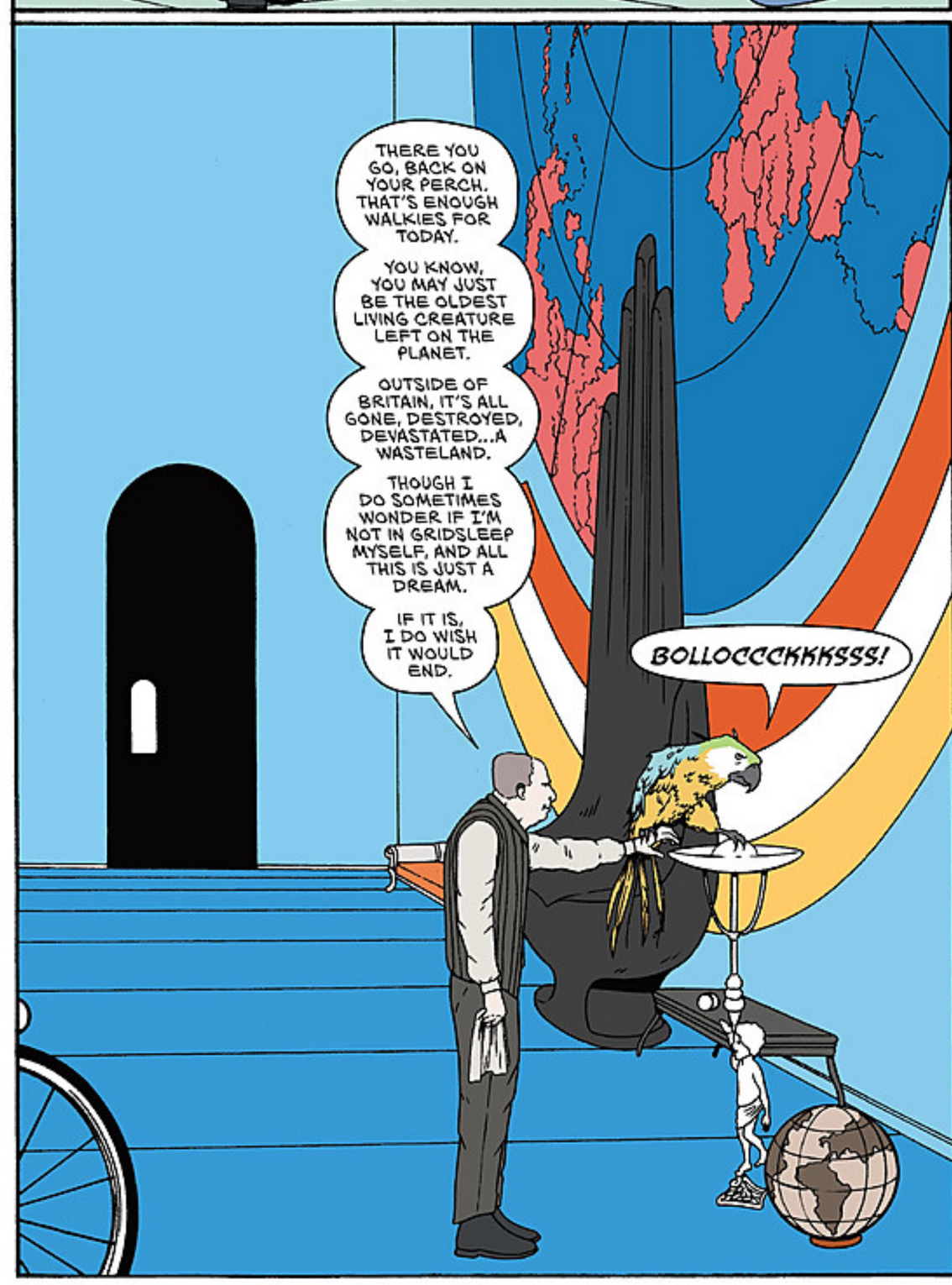

WELCOME EVERYONE! I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH IT MEANS TO ME, SEEING MY LOYAL CITIZENS GATHERED TOGETHER AS WE FACE OUR GREATEST CRISIS.
AFTER GENERATIONS OF PEACE AND STABILITY, THIS ISLAND REALM IS ONCE AGAIN UNDER ATTACK AND THIS TIME THE ENEMY IS WITHIN. I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT GENERAL BRICK HAS BEEN PLOTTING WITH THE FORMER CHIEF ENGINEER, BOBOK, TO SABOTAGE THE GRID!
MANY OF YOU HAVE PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED THE HORRIFICALLY VIOLENT EVENT THAT GENERAL BRICK FED INTO THE GRID. SOME OF YOU WERE DRIVEN TO LEAVE GRIDSLEEP BECAUSE OF IT.
I KNOW HOW SHOCKING THIS MUST BE TO YOU, TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN BETRAYED BY THESE VILE TRAITORS WHO I HAVE NURTURED AND LOVED AS I LOVE ALL MY SUBJECTS.
BUT NOW, IN THIS DARK HOUR, WE WILL JOIN TOGETHER AND FIGHT BACK. WE WILL MARCH ON THE TOWER OF INFAMY, KNOWN AS THE LIFE HOUSE, WHERE BRICK AND BOBOK ARE COWERING LIKE VERMIN WITH THEIR BAND OF OUTLAWS AND DEGENERATES.
THIS MAGNIFICENT STRUCTURE YOU SEE BEFORE YOU, IS THE GREATEST WEAPON EVER DEVISED BY MODERN SCIENCE. THE ROLLING ROCK IS AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE THAT WILL ANNIHILATE OUR ENEMIES IN THE FLAMES OF OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
YOUR HOME AWAY HOME

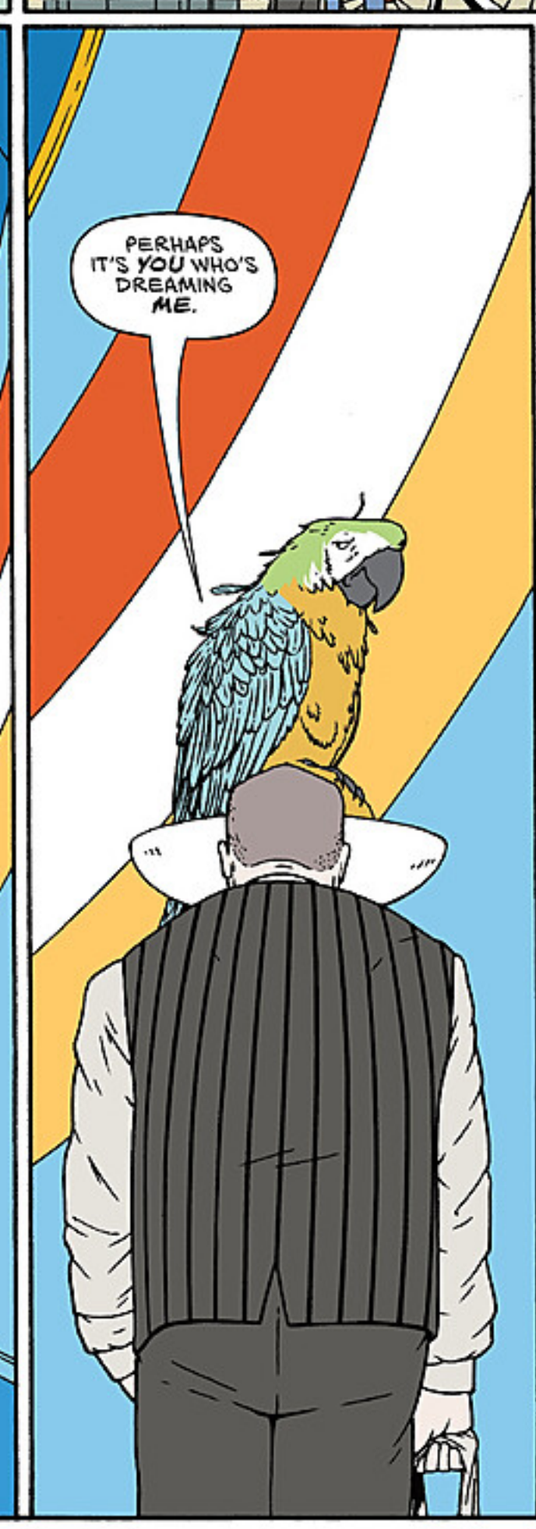

"WHEN THE BATTLE IS WON, A NEW ERA WILL BEGIN.
"WE ARE ENTERING A NEW AGE AND YOU HAVE A NEW LEADER. A YOUNG PERSON WHO IS ONE OF YOU. BORN OUT OF GRID SLEEP.
"SHE IS THE FULFILMENT OF THE GRID'S GREAT PURPOSE, THE ONE WHO WAS FORETOLD BY OUR SCIENTISTS, THE MARVELLOUS SILVER CHILD, THE BRINGER OF PEACE.
"HER NAME IS VELETANIA AND SHE CARRIES WITHIN HER THE GREATEST WEAPON OF ALL.
"HER LOVE SHINES ON YOU ALL."

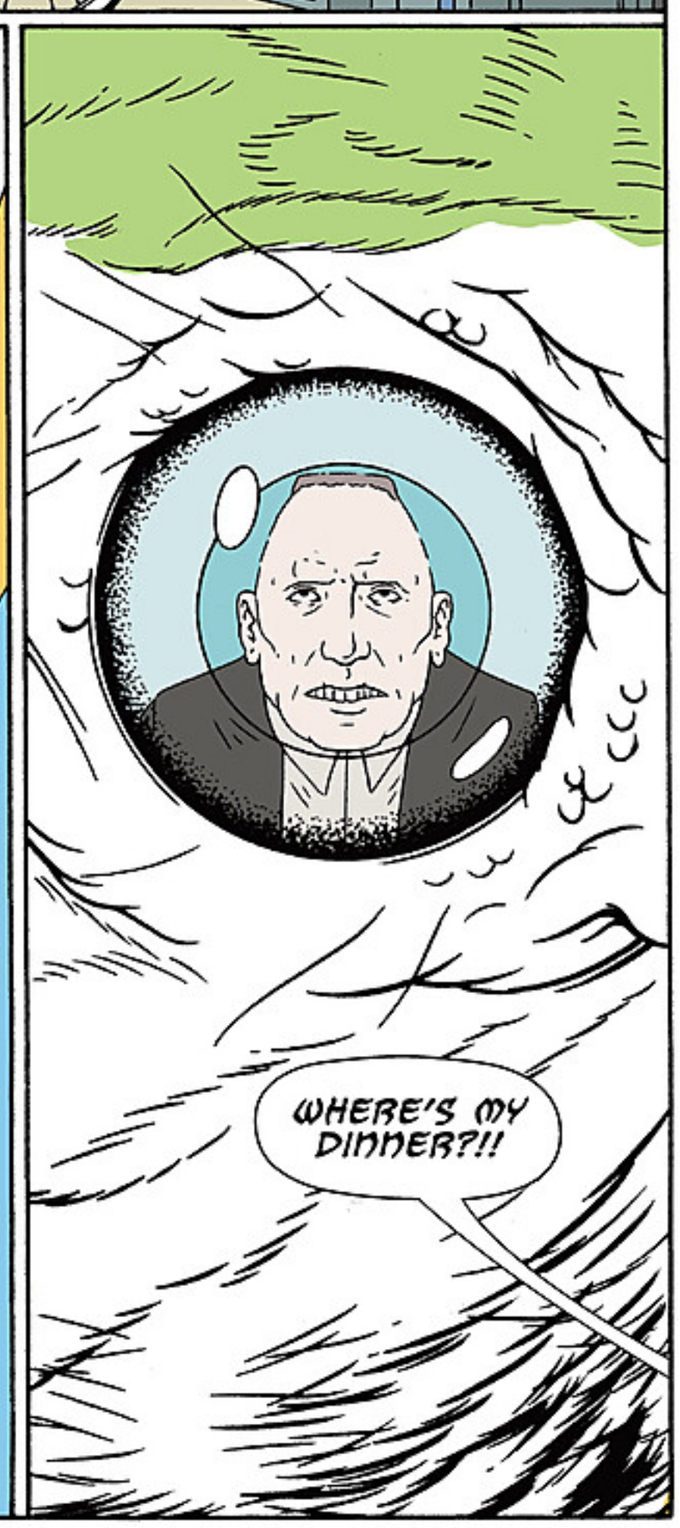

EXCUSE ME, MA'AM, A CRAZY PERSON HAS ARRIVED. SAYS HE'S COME FROM THE LIFE HOUSE. HE'S WEARING A GRID SUIT SO--
--SO HE'S AN ESCAPEE AND PROBABLY IS INDEED TOTALLY BATSHIT.
OH WELL, HAUL HIM IN.
YOUR MAJESTY, I'M DAVE WIL--
YES, YES, I RECOGNISE YOU. MARY CROPPER'S EX.
UM, YEAH. SHE'S BEEN TURNED AGAINST YOU BY SOMEONE CALLED BOBBY AND HE'S MADE THIS MUSIC CONTRAPTION...AN ELECTRONIC SOUND SYSTEM.
THAT I ALSO KNOW.
MY BEAUTIFUL SILVER CHILD IS ONE WITH THE DEAD. SHE SHARES THEIR MEMORIES AND SHE TELLS ME EVERYTHING.
OH.
YOU'RE IN DANGER OF BORING ME.
ER, THERE'S A FORCEFIELD. IT'S ALL AROUND THE LIFE HOUSE.
THERE'S A SECRET WAY IN, UNDERGROUND. I RECKON THAT'S THE WEAK SPOT.
NO FORCEFIELD CAN KEEP ME OUT. ANYTHING ELSE?
ER...
WHY ARE YOU HERE ANYWAY? WHY ARE YOU BETRAYING YOUR GIRLFRIEND LIKE THIS?
BECAUSE BOBBY HAS POISONED HER MIND. THE MUSIC IS DANGEROUS.
THEY THINK IT'S GOING TO MAKE THEM ALL ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE OR SOMETHING BUT IT CAN KILL PEOPLE. I SAW...
RIGHT. THANK YOU SO MUCH. YOU MAY LEAVE.
BUT...I WANT...
...CAN I GO BACK ON THE GRID?
I JUST WANT TO DREAM...

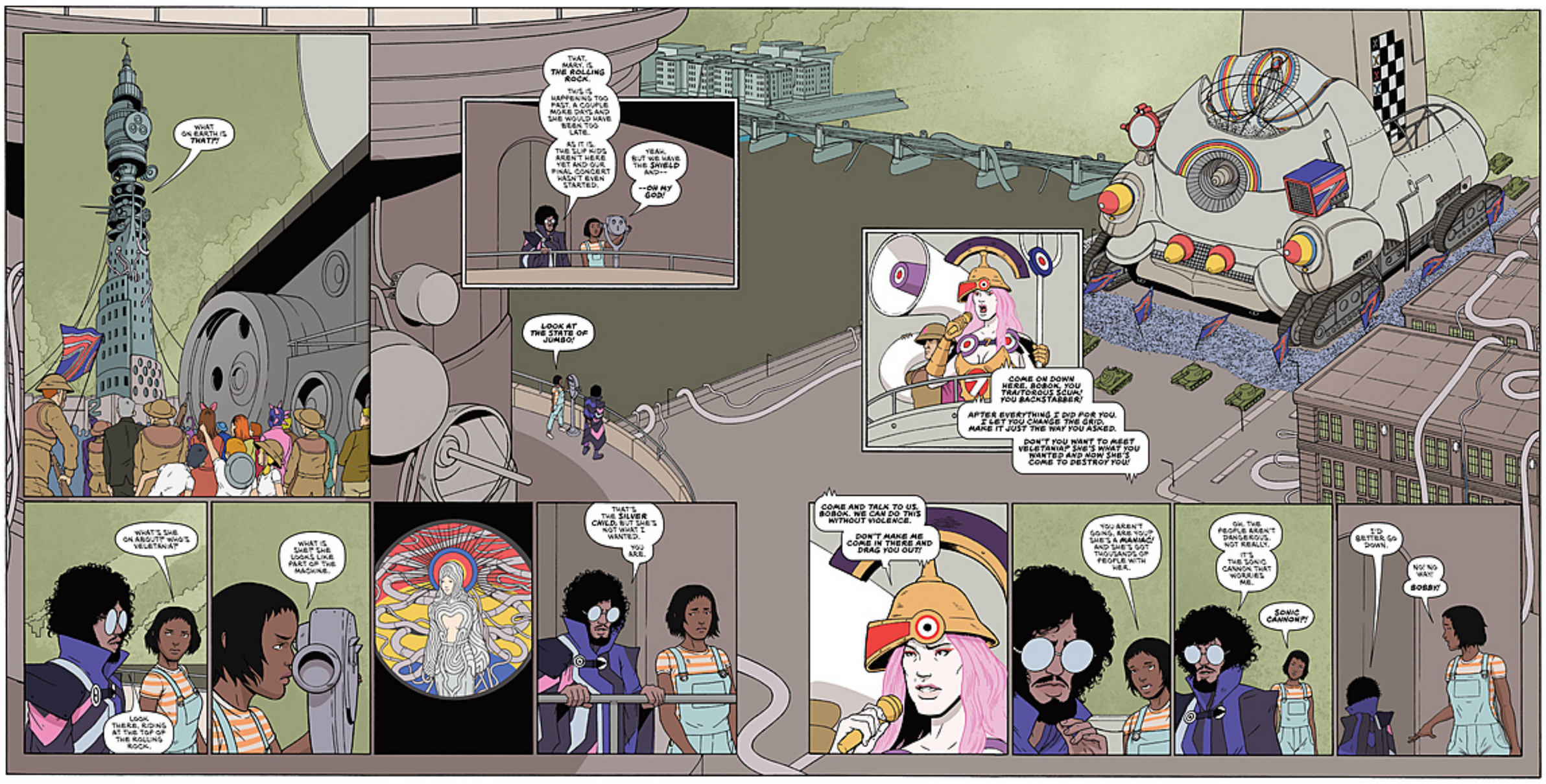

HOW ODD. HALF THE COUNTRY IS LEAVING THE GRID AND THIS ONE INSISTS ON PLUGGING BACK IN.
MIND YOU, HE DOES LOOK PEACEFUL, DOESN'T HE?

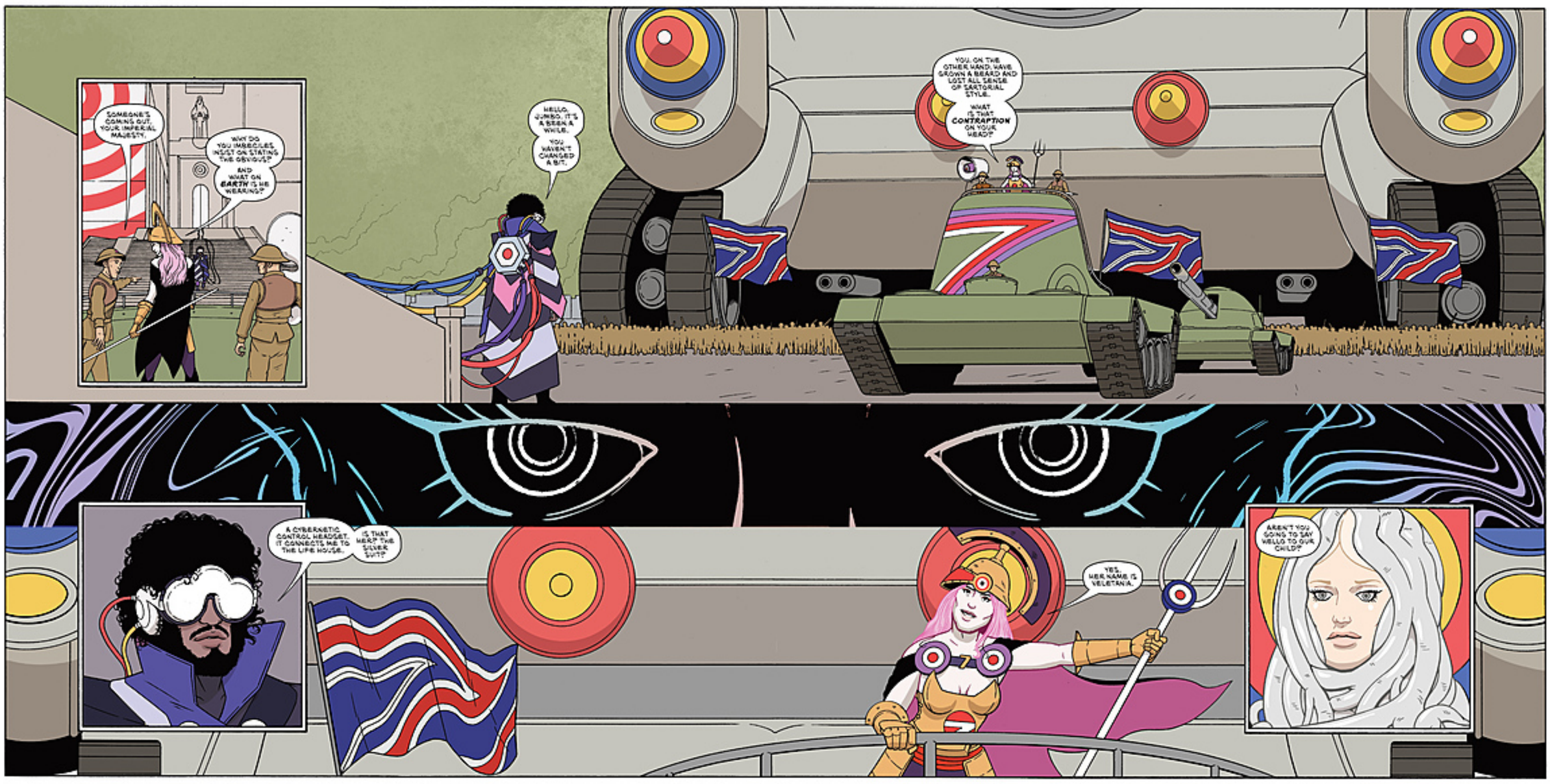

LOOK AT THE MAP. EVERY DOT ANOTHER LOYAL SUBJECT SUFFERING KARMIC OBLIVION.
PIECES OF HATE! PIECES OF HATE!


THERE YOU GO, BACK ON YOUR PERCH. THAT'S ENOUGH WALKIES FOR TODAY.
YOU KNOW, YOU MAY JUST BE THE OLDEST LIVING CREATURE LEFT ON THE PLANET.
OUTSIDE OF BRITAIN, IT'S ALL GONE, DESTROYED, DEVASTATED...A WASTELAND.
THOUGH I DO SOMETIMES WONDER IF I'M NOT IN GRIDSLEEP MYSELF, AND ALL THIS IS JUST A DREAM.
IF IT IS, I DO WISH IT WOULD END.
BOLLOCCCKKKSSS!

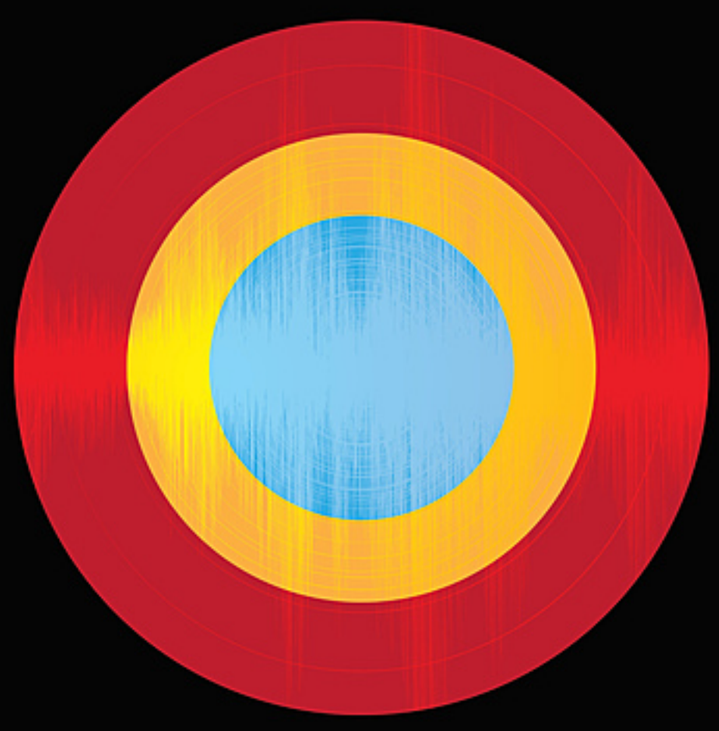

PERHAPS IT'S *YOU* WHO'S DREAMING *ME*.

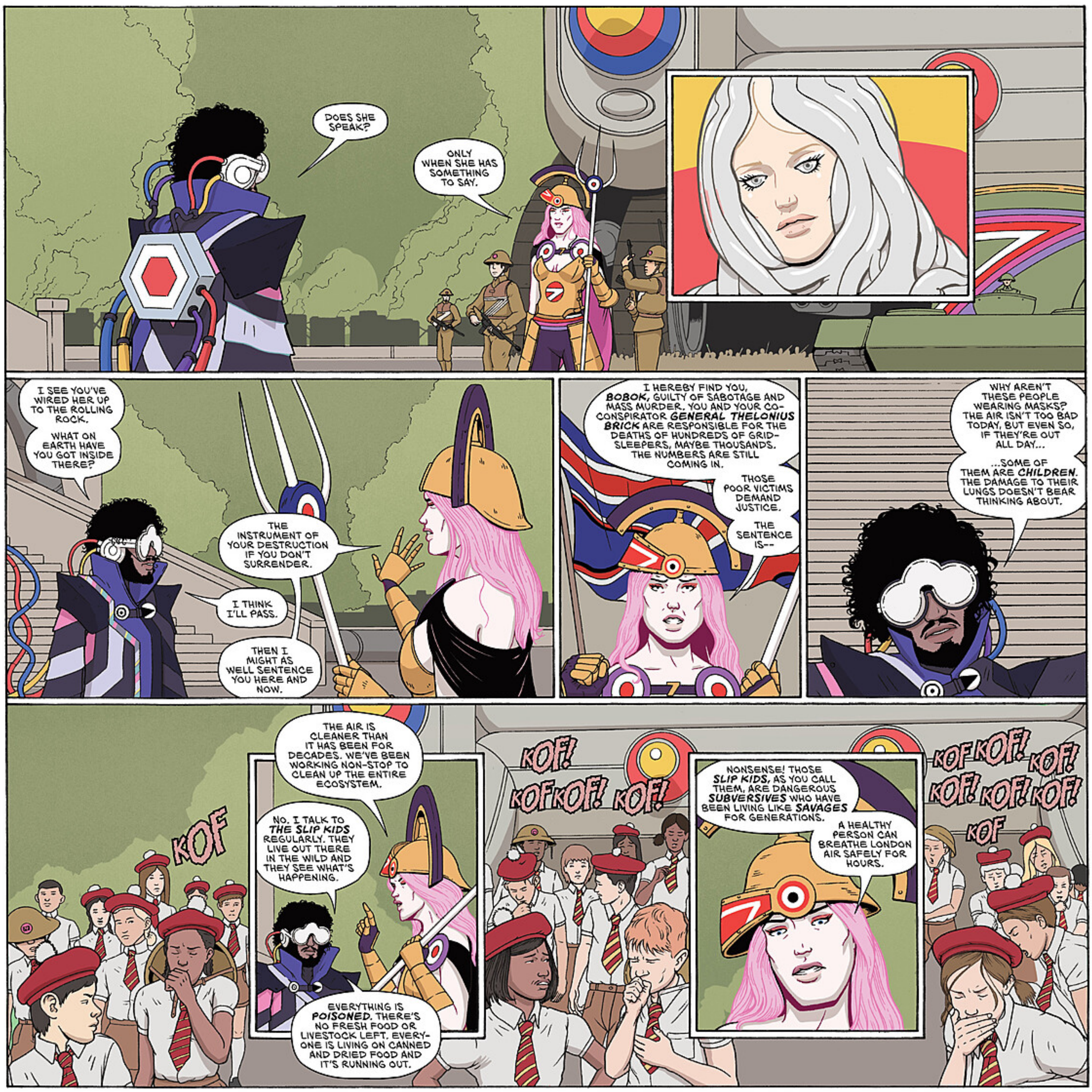

WHERE'S MY DINNER?!!

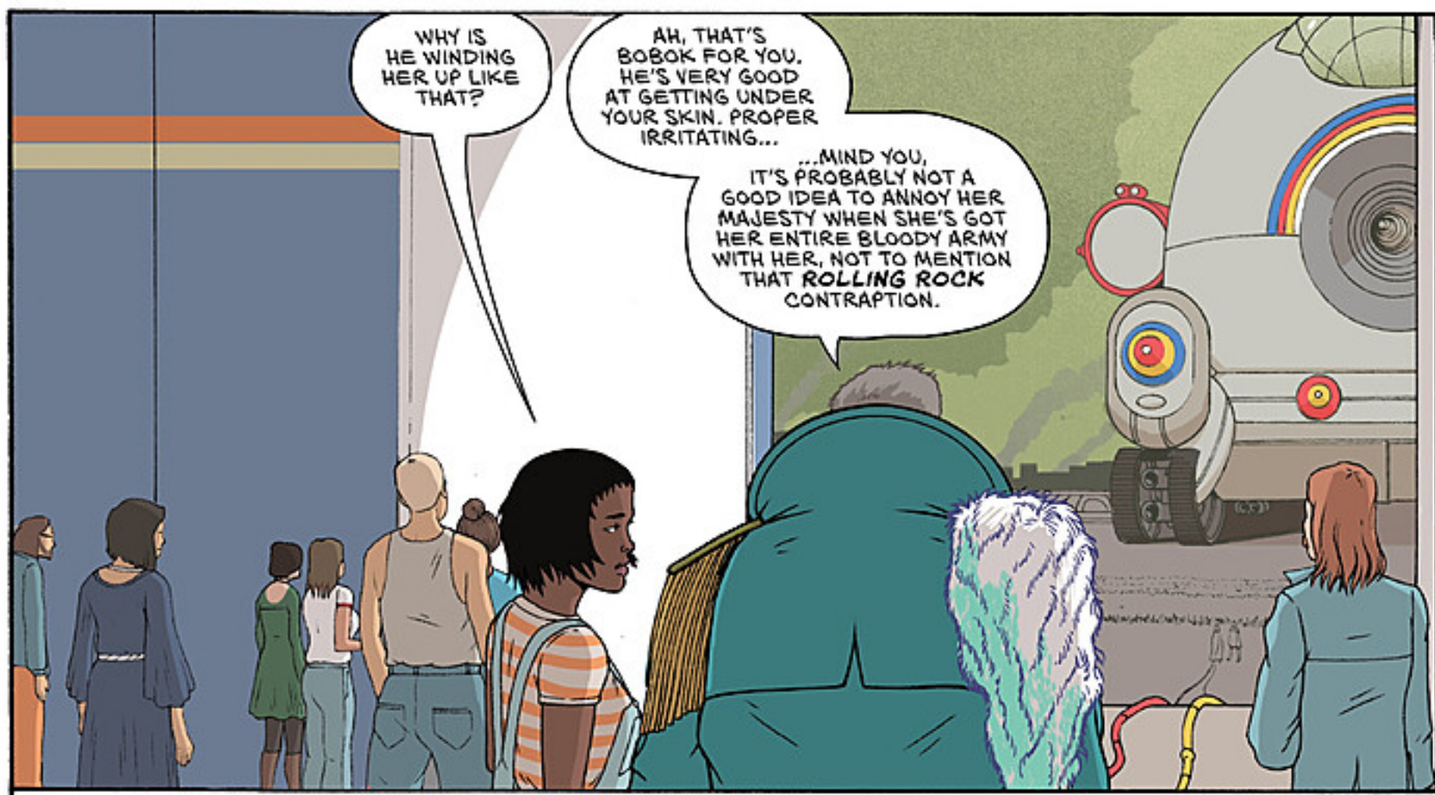

WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?!
THAT, MARY, IS THE ROLLING ROCK.
THIS IS HAPPENING TOO FAST. A COUPLE MORE DAYS AND SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO LATE.
AS IT IS, THE ELIP KIDS AREN'T HERE YET AND OUR FINAL CONCERT HASN'T EVEN STARTED.
YEAH, BUT WE HAVE THE SHIELD AND--
--OH MY GOD!
LOOK AT THE STATE OF JUMBO!
COME ON DOWN HERE, BOBOK, YOU TRAITOROUS SCUM! YOU BACKSTABBER!
AFTER EVERYTHING I DID FOR YOU. I GET YOU CHANGE THE GRID, MAKE IT JUST THE WAY YOU ASKED.
DON'T YOU WANT TO MEET VELETANIAP SHE'S WHAT YOU WANTED AND NOW SHE'S COME TO DESTROY YOU!
WHAT'S SHE ON ABOUT? WHO'S VELETANIAP
LOOK THERE, RIDING AT THE TOP OF THE ROLLING ROCK.
WHAT IS SHE? SHE LOOKS LIKE PART OF THE MACHINE.
THAT'S THE SILVER CAVEL. BUT SHE'S NOT WHAT I WANTED.
YOU ARE.
COME AND TALK TO US, BOBOK. WE CAN DO THIS WITHOUT VIOLENCE.
DON'T MAKE ME COME IN THERE AND DRAG YOU OUT!
YOU AREN'T GOING, ARE YOU? SHE'S A MANIAC! AND SHE'S GOT THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WITH HER.
OH, THE PEOPLE AREN'T DANGEROUS. NOT REALLY.
IT'S THE SONIC CANNON THAT WORRIES ME.
SONIC CANNON?!
I'D BETTER GO DOWN.
NO! NO WAY!
BOBBY!


SOMEONE'S COMING OUT, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
WHY DO YOU IMBECILES INSIST ON STATING THE OBVIOUS?
AND WHAT ON EARTH IS HE WEARING?
HELLO, JUNKO. IT'S A BEEN A WHILE.
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT.
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE GROWN A BEARD AND LOST ALL SENSE OF SARTORIAL STYLE.
WHAT IS THAT CONTRAPTION ON YOUR HEAD?
A CYBERNETIC CONTROL HEADSET. IT CONNECTS ME TO THE LIFE HOUSE.
IS THAT MERP THE SILVER SUIT?
YES. HER NAME IS VELETRA'A.
AREN'T YOU GOING TO SAY HELLO TO OUR CHILD?

CHAPTER FOUR

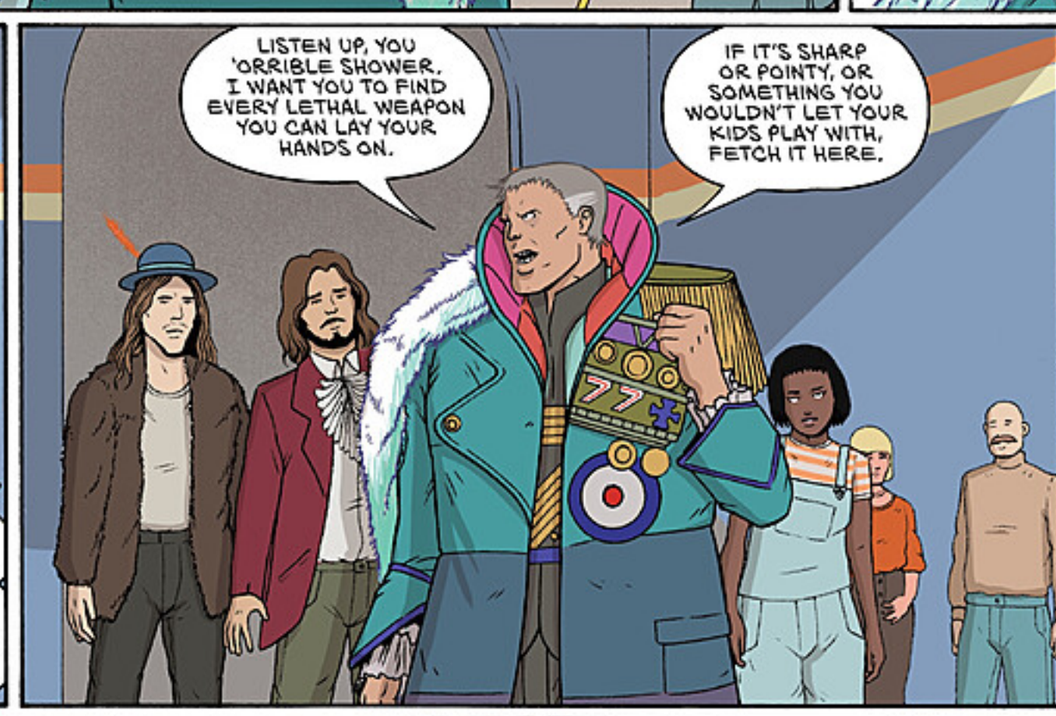


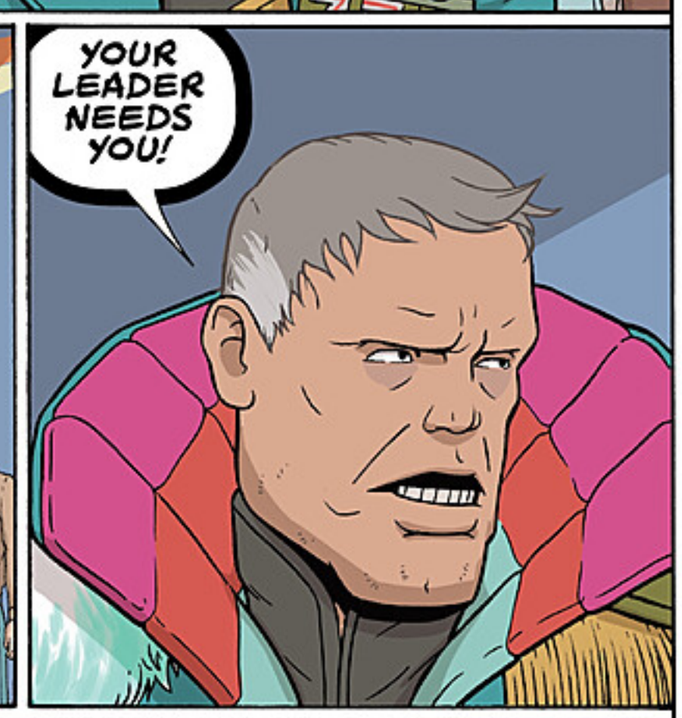

DOES SHE SPEAK?
ONLY WHEN SHE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.
I SEE YOU'VE WIRED HER UP TO THE ROLLING ROCK.
WHAT ON EARTH HAVE YOU GOT INSIDE THERE?
THE INSTRUMENT OF YOUR DESTRUCTION IF YOU DON'T SURRENDER.
I THINK I'LL PASS.
THEN I MIGHT AS WELL SENTENCE YOU HERE AND NOW.
I HEREBY FIND YOU, BOBOK, GUILTY OF SABOTAGE AND MASS MURDER. YOU AND YOUR CO-CONSPIRATOR GENERAL THELONIUS BRICK ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF HUNDREDS OF GRID-SLEEPERS, MAYBE THOUSANDS. THE NUMBERS ARE STILL COMING IN.
THOSE POOR VICTIMS DEMAND JUSTICE.
THE SENTENCE IS--
WHY AREN'T THESE PEOPLE WEARING MASKS? THE AIR ISN'T TOO BAD TODAY, BUT EVEN SO, IF THEY'RE OUT ALL DAY...
...SOME OF THEM ARE CHILDREN. THE DAMAGE TO THEIR LUNGS DOESN'T BEAR THINKING ABOUT.
THE AIR IS CLEANER THAN IT HAS BEEN FOR DECADES. WE'VE BEEN WORKING NON-STOP TO CLEAN UP THE ENTIRE ECOSYSTEM.
NO. I TALK TO THE SLIP KIDS REGULARLY. THEY LIVE OUT THERE IN THE WILD AND THEY SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING.
EVERYTHING IS POISONED. THERE'S NO FRESH FOOD OR LIVESTOCK LEFT. EVERYONE IS LIVING ON CANNED AND DRIED FOOD AND IT'S RUNNING OUT.
KOF
KOF! KOFKOF! KOF!
NONSENSE! THOSE SLIP KIDS, AS YOU CALL THEM, ARE DANGEROUS SUBVERSIVES WHO HAVE BEEN LIVING LIKE SAVAGES FOR GENERATIONS.
A HEALTHY PERSON CAN BREATHE LONDON AIR SAFELY FOR HOURS.
KOF KOF! KOF! KOF! KOF! KOF!
KOF


WHY IS HE WINDING HER UP LIKE THAT?
AH, THAT'S BOBOK FOR YOU. HE'S VERY GOOD AT GETTING UNDER YOUR SKIN. PROPER IRRITATING...
...MIND YOU, IT'S PROBABLY NOT A GOOD IDEA TO ANNOY HER MAJESTY WHEN SHE'S GOT HER ENTIRE BLOODY ARMY WITH HER, NOT TO MENTION THAT ROLLING ROCK CONTRAPTION.

NEVER DID KNOW WHAT THAT WAS ALL ABOUT. SHE LIKES HER SECRETS, DOES JUMBO.
SHOULDN'T WE DO SOME-THING?

RIGHT, YOU LOT. BREAK OUT THE WEAPONS!
WEAPONS?
DON'T YOU HAVE AN ARMOURY? GUNS! AMMO!
NOT REALLY.
WE HAVE A STORAGE FACILITY WHERE WE KEEP THE TOOLS.

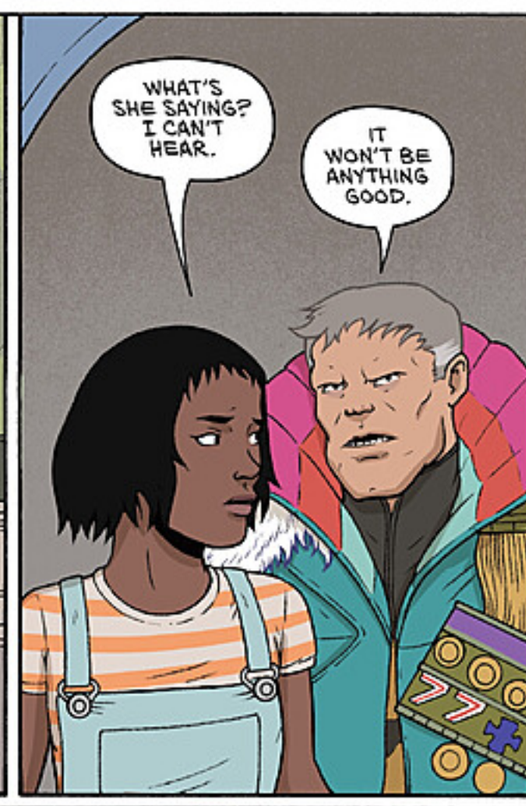

LISTEN UP, YOU 'ORRIBLE SHOWER. I WANT YOU TO FIND EVERY LETHAL WEAPON YOU CAN LAY YOUR HANDS ON.
IF IT'S SHARP OR POINTY, OR SOMETHING YOU WOULDN'T LET YOUR KIDS PLAY WITH, FETCH IT HERE.


YOUR LEADER NEEDS YOU!

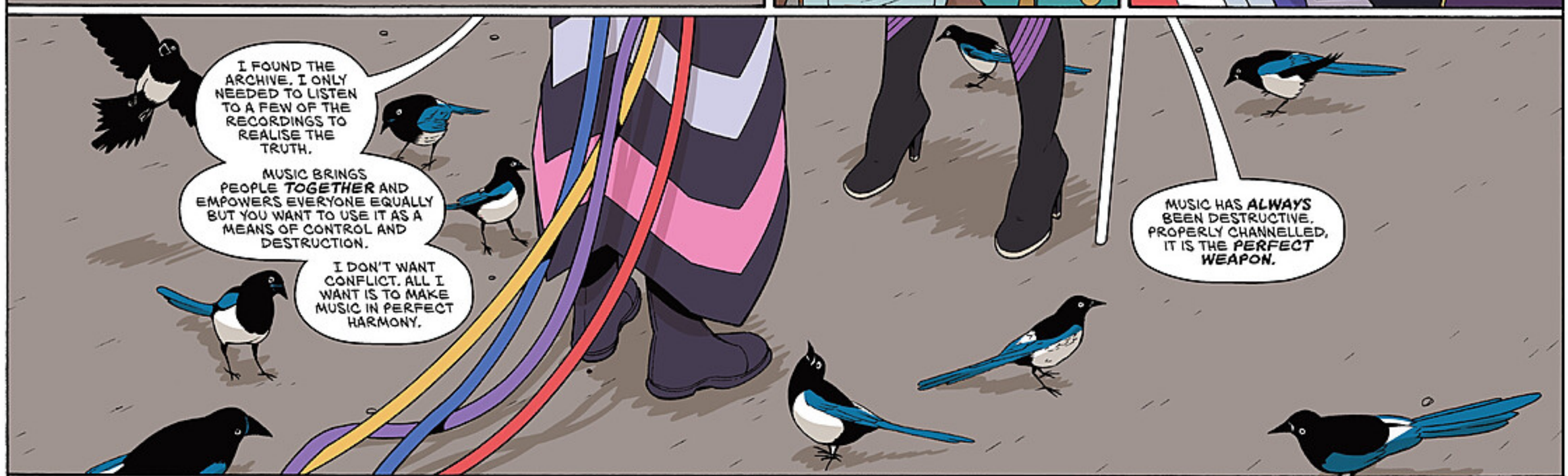
LOOK AT THIS. I RECKON I COULD KNOCK JUMBO FOR SIX WITH THIS BEAUTY.
ARE YOU KIDDING? PUT THAT DOWN.
MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS ARE SACRED.

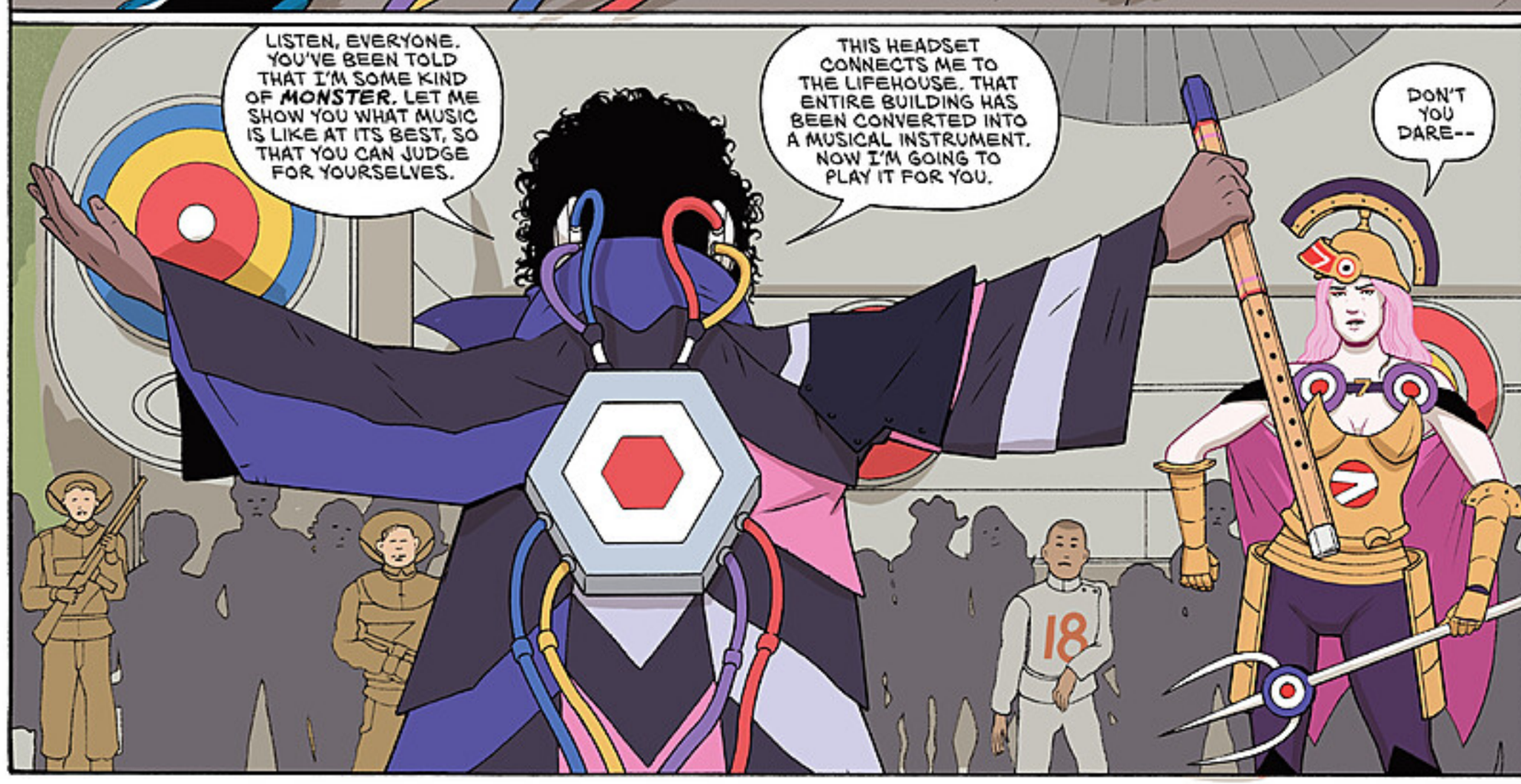
WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO ME YOU SAID THAT IF MORE LIVES WERE FED INTO THE GRID-SUITERS' EXPERIENCE, THEIR KARMA WOULD IMPROVE UNTIL FINALLY A 'SILVER SUIT' WOULD BREAK THROUGH.
THEY WOULD BE A PERFECT BEING, WHO HAD COMPLETE EMPATHY WITH THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE.
WELL, HERE SHE IS. THIS IS WHAT YOU DREAMED OF.
MY DREAM?
I REALISED A LONG TIME AGO THAT THE GRID HAS ITS LIMITATIONS.
I WASN'T SURE WHAT THE SILVER SUIT WOULD BE. MAYBE SOMETHING THAT WASN'T HUMAN ANYMORE. MAYBE SOMETHING MORE THAN HUMAN.
YOU HAD A FEW DOUBTS, SO YOU LEFT ME?! JUST LIKE THAT, WITHOUT A WORD?
WHY DIDN'T YOU TALK TO ME?
YOU WEREN'T LISTENING. YOU NEVER DO.
ALL THIS TIME. I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
I'VE BEEN WORKING ON SOMETHING BETTER THAN THE GRID.
MUSIC?
HA! YES, I HEARD ABOUT THAT.
I ALSO HEAR YOU HAVE A NEW PROTÉGÉ OF YOUR OWN.
YES, I DO. SOMEONE VERY SPECIAL.

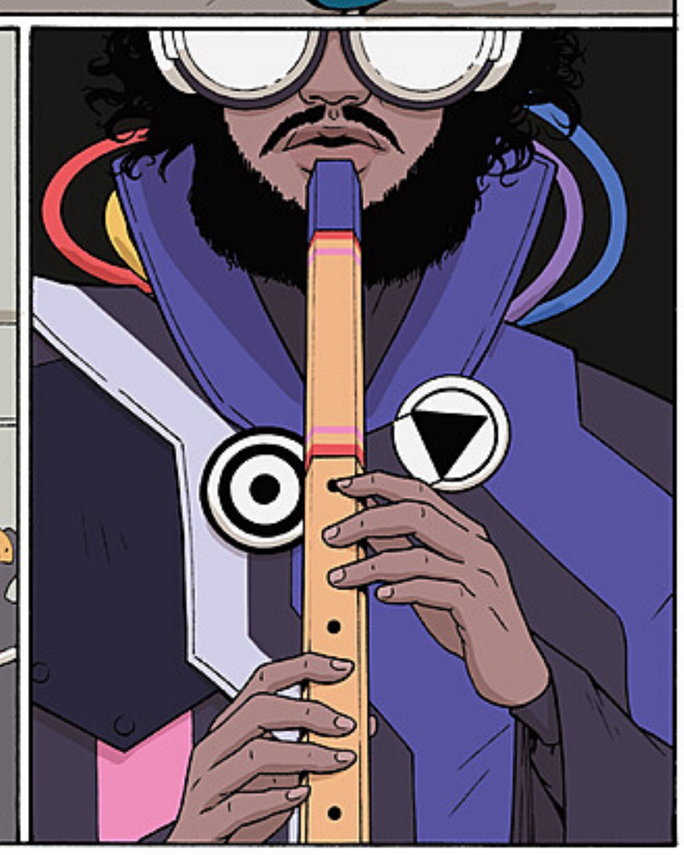
THERE'S STILL TIME FOR US TO MAKE PEACE, BOBBY. JUST ADMIT YOU WERE WRONG AND COME BACK TO ME.
DON'T HUMILIATE ME IN FRONT OF MY SUBJECTS OR YOU'LL MAKE ME DO SOMETHING WE'LL BOTH REGRET.


WHAT'S SHE SAYING? I CAN'T HEAR.
IT WON'T BE ANYTHING GOOD.

THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE HAVE DIFFERENT GOALS, EVEN THOUGH YOU JUMBOS NEVER ACTUALLY DESTROYED THE MUSIC YOU BANNED.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

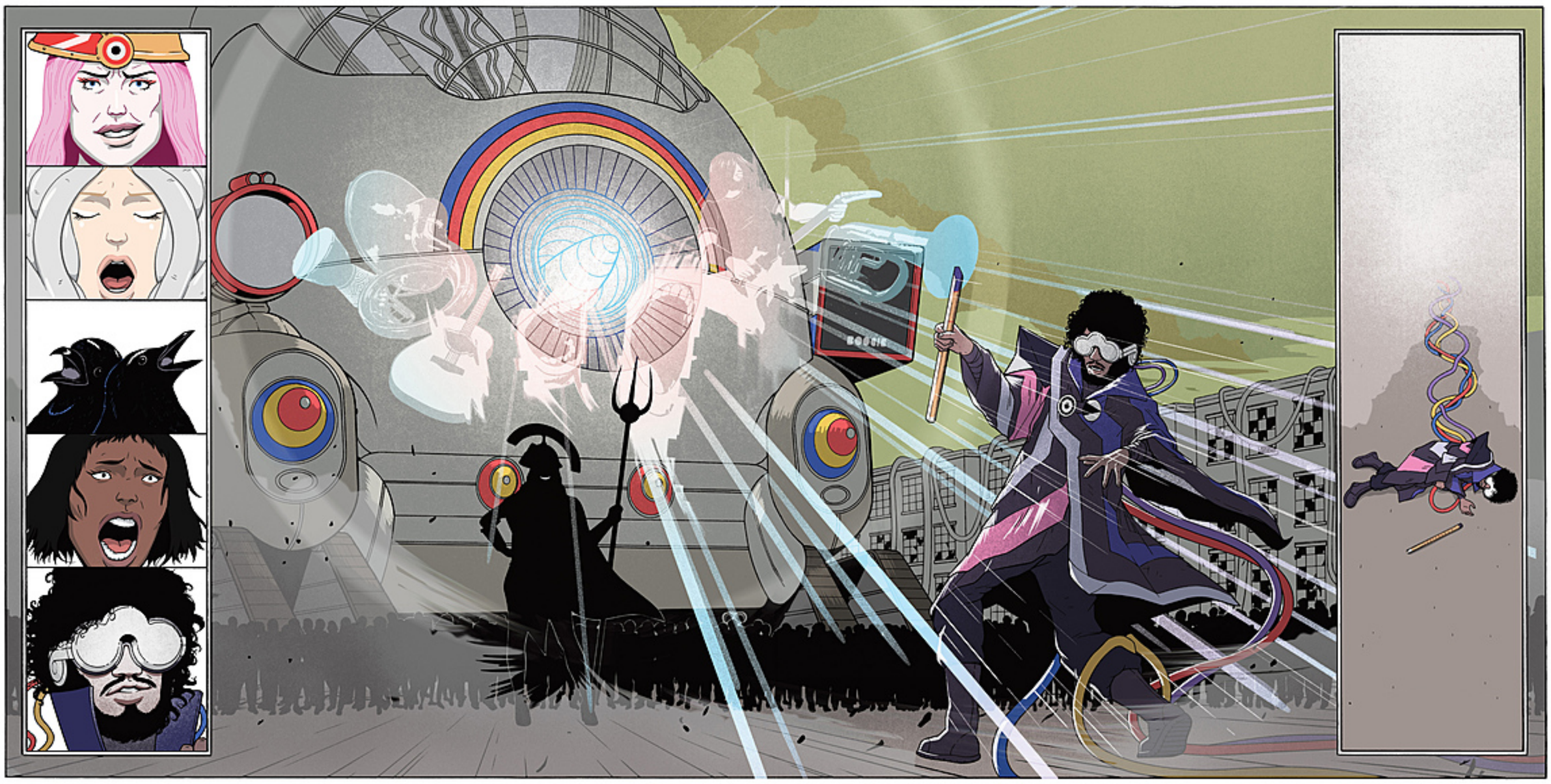

I FOUND THE ARCHIVE. I ONLY NEEDED TO LISTEN TO A FEW OF THE RECORDINGS TO REALISE THE TRUTH.
MUSIC BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER AND EMPOWERS EVERYONE EQUALLY BUT YOU WANT TO USE IT AS A MEANS OF CONTROL AND DESTRUCTION.
I DON'T WANT CONFLICT. ALL I WANT IS TO MAKE MUSIC IN PERFECT HARMONY.
MUSIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN DESTRUCTIVE. PROPERLY CHANNELLED, IT IS THE PERFECT WEAPON.


LISTEN, EVERYONE. YOU'VE BEEN TOLD THAT I'M SOME KIND OF MONSTER. LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT MUSIC IS LIKE AT ITS BEST, SO THAT YOU CAN JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES.
THIS HEADSET CONNECTS ME TO THE LIFEHOUSE. THAT ENTIRE BUILDING HAS BEEN CONVERTED INTO A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. NOW I'M GOING TO PLAY IT FOR YOU.
DON'T YOU DARE--

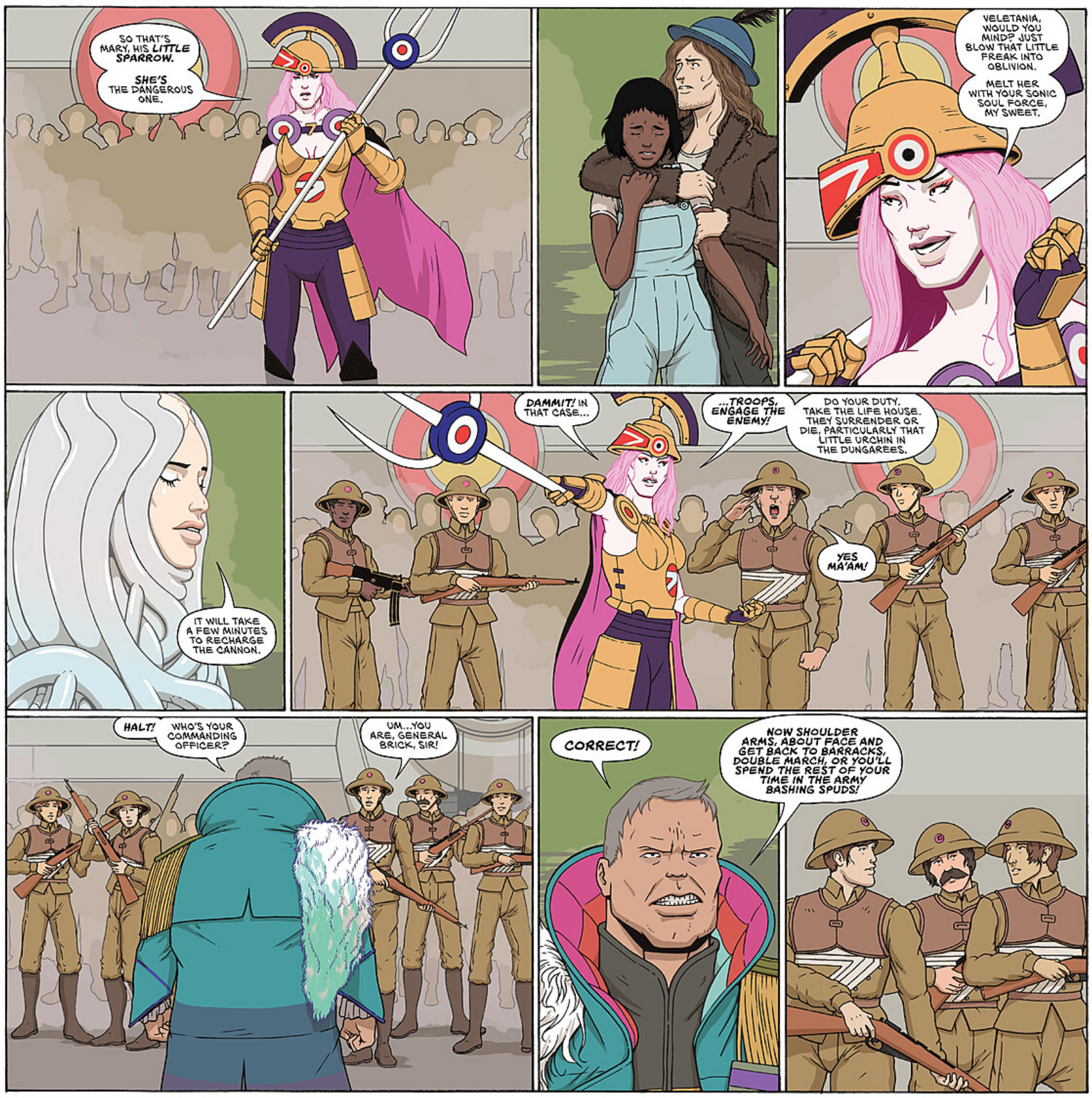


NOOOOOOO!
HOLY STEAMING SHIT ON A STICK!
NOW HE'S REALLY GONE AND DONE IT.

ENOUGH!
YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE THE ROLLING ROCK?
HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF CONTRABAND MUSIC HAVE BEEN DIGITISED AND FED INTO THE ROLLING ROCK'S COMPUTER ARCHIVE.
MILLIONS OF RECORDINGS. EVERY NOTE EVER PLAYED ON EVERY INSTRUMENT KNOWN TO HUMANKIND.
NOT EVERY NOTE.
VELETANIA. MY DARLING. IT'S TIME TO SHOW YOUR CREATOR WHAT MUSIC IS REALLY ALL ABOUT.
BOOGIE
HHUUUMMMMMMMM
I GAVE YOU EVERY CHANCE BUT YOU INSIST ON DEFYING ME.
ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS ADORE ME, BOBOK.
YOU CAN'T ASK FOR ADORATION. THE PEOPLE WHO SAY THEY ADORE YOU ARE FAKING IT. TO BE HONEST, I NEVER EVEN LIKED YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? SING, MY DARLING. SING YOUR DEADLY SONG!



BOBBY!
MARY?
BOBBY, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
YES, LITTLE SPARROW.
WE HAVE TO GET YOU BACK INTO THE LIFE HOUSE. YOU'LL BE FINE.
NO, I'M AFRAID NOT. I'M DYING.
SINCE I FIRST HEARD THOSE MAGICAL NOTES IN MY HEAD, MUSIC HAS BEEN MY LIFE. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT IT WOULD BE THE DEATH OF ME TOO.
DON'T BE STUPID. YOU CAN'T DIE.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S ONLY MY BODY THAT'S DYING.
I'LL STILL BE WITH YOU, IN THE MUSIC, IN THE LIFE HOUSE. THAT'S WHAT COUNTS.
BUT WE NEED YOU TO...TO LEAD US. YOU'RE LIKE... THE PERSON WHO GUIDES US.
THE CARETAKER?
THAT'S YOUR JOB NOW.
ME? I CAN'T--
YES YOU CAN, MARY. YOU'RE BETTER AT CARING THAN ANYONE I'VE EVER MET.
YOU HAVE TO FINISH THE MUSIC, JUST THE WAY I TAUGHT YOU.
COME ON, MARY. YOU HEARD HIM, WE HAVE TO KEEP YOU SAFE.
WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM.

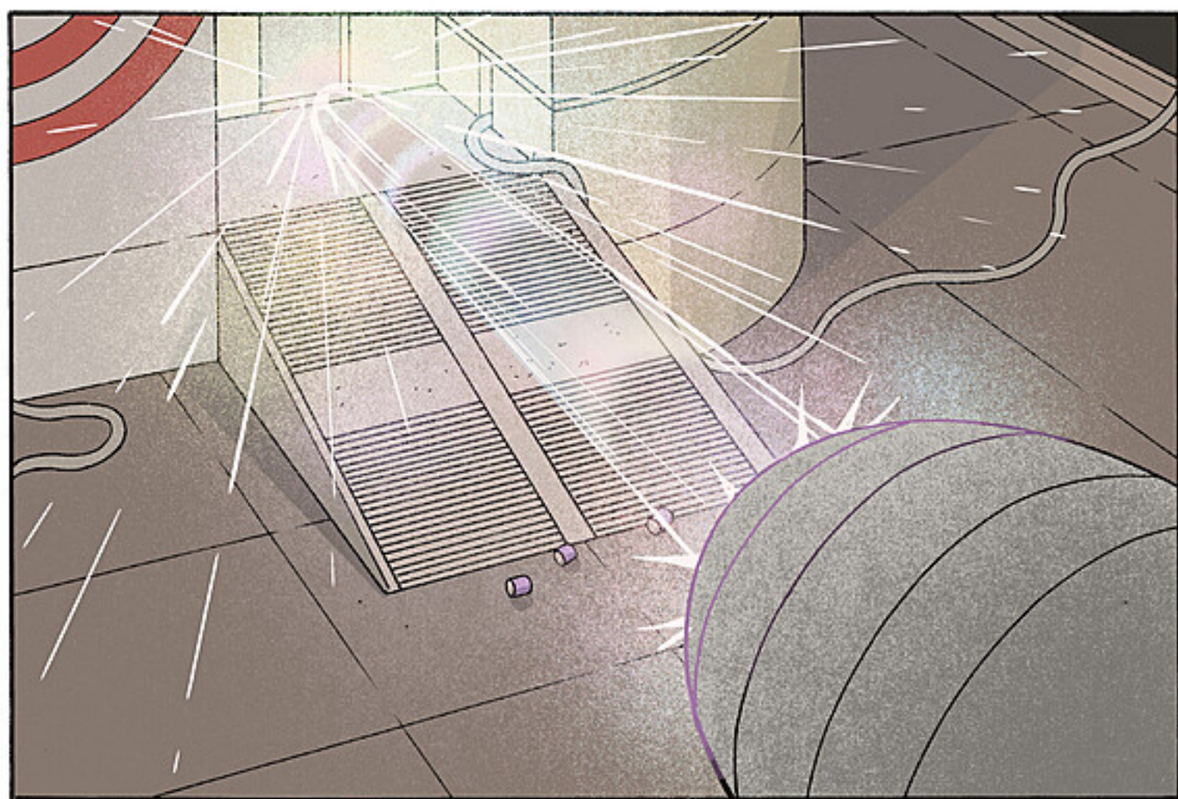

SO THAT'S MARY, HIS LITTLE SPARROW.
SHE'S THE DANGEROUS ONE.
VELETANIA, WOULD YOU MIND? JUST BLOW THAT LITTLE FREAK INTO OBLIVION.
MELT HER WITH YOUR SONIC SOUL FORCE, MY SWEET.
IT WILL TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO RECHARGE THE CANNON.
DAMMIT! IN THAT CASE...
...TROOPS, ENGAGE THE ENEMY!
DO YOUR DUTY. TAKE THE LIFE HOUSE. THEY SURRENDER OR DIE, PARTICULARLY THAT LITTLE URCHIN IN THE DUNGAREES.
YES MA'AM!
HALT!
WHO'S YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER?
UM...YOU ARE, GENERAL BRICK, SIR!
CORRECT!
NOW SHOULDER ARMS, ABOUT FACE AND GET BACK TO BARRACKS, DOUBLE MARCH, OR YOU'LL SPEND THE REST OF YOUR TIME IN THE ARMY BASHING SPUDS!

RIGHT, LET'S GET YOU INSIDE.
YOU TOO? FAITHFUL BRICK, IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT.
I CAME HERE TO SAVE YOU, YOU PILLOCK, NOT TO WATCH YOU DIE.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHY YOU CAME HERE. I DON'T NEED SAVING.
TAKE THIS HEADSET OFF ME.
SOLDIERS OF THE EMPIRE! I AM YOUR SUPREME COMMANDER!
ANYONE WHO FAILS IN THEIR DUTY WILL BE COURT-MARTIALLED AND EXECUTED!
FUNNY THING. I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER ACTUALLY SEEN YOUR EYES.
NO ONE HAS.

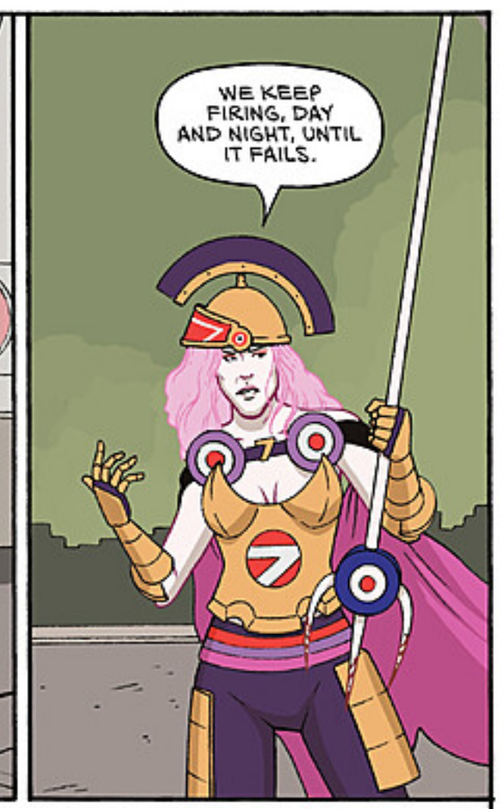
TAKE THE HEADSET AND THE FLUTE.
FLUTE. RIGHT.
BRICK. CONCENTRATE. YOU HAVE TO DO ONE THING. THIS IS WHY YOU'RE HERE.
YOU HAVE TO GIVE THE FLUTE AND THE HEADSET TO MARY. SHE IS GOING TO TAKE MY PLACE AND LEAD THE SONG.
MARY? THAT LITTLE GIRL?
GET EVERYONE BACK INSIDE AND PUT THE SHIELD BACK UP.
AND BRICK, THE ROLLING ROCK. IT'S TOO BIG TO BE JUST STORAGE FOR MUSIC.
SO WHAT IS IT?
BOBOK!
DON'T YOU FUCKING DIE ON ME!

LISTEN UP!
ALL OF YOU BACK TO THE LIFE HOUSE AND LOOK SHARP!
WHAT ABOUT BOBBY?
DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME ON HIM. HE'S DEAD.
BRICK, YOU TWO-FACED BASTARD! I DIDN'T GIVE YOU PERMISSION TO LEAVE!
LOOK OUT!
UUK!
WHAT?
WHY DID YOU GO AND DO THAT, YOU SAD LITTLE PRICK?
WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?

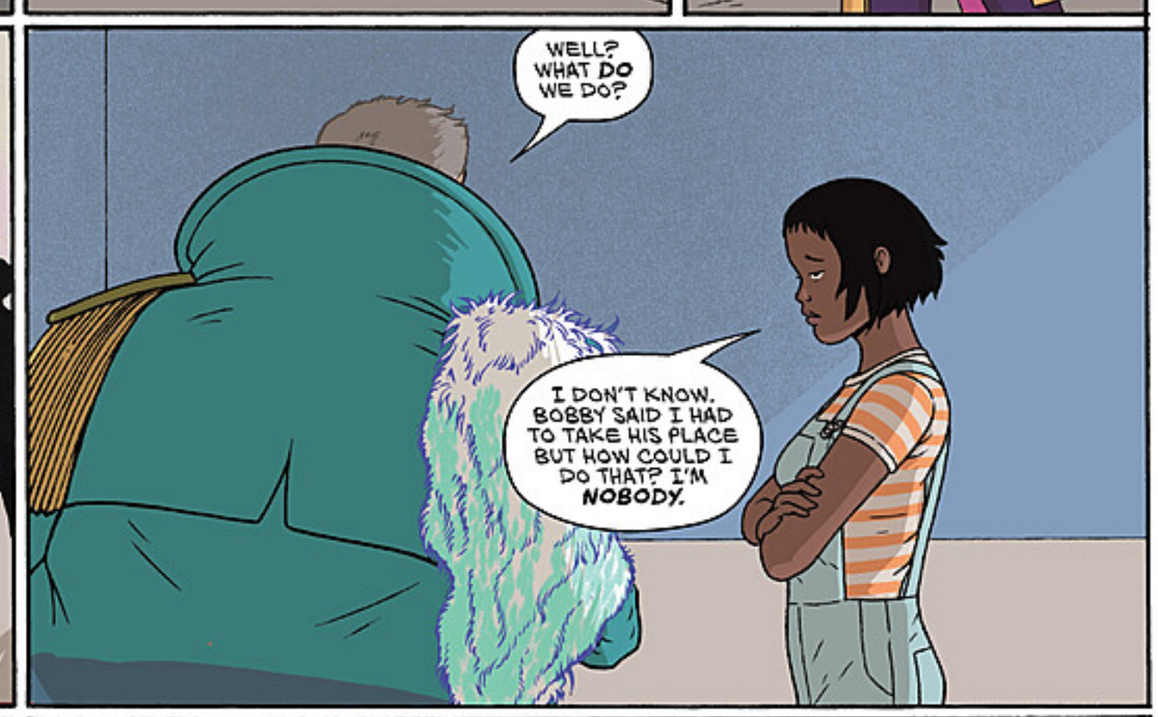
BEANS
SOMEONE TURN ON THE SHIELD!
WELL, LOOK AT THAT. A FEW OF YOU HEROIC TWATS MADE IT INSIDE.
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?

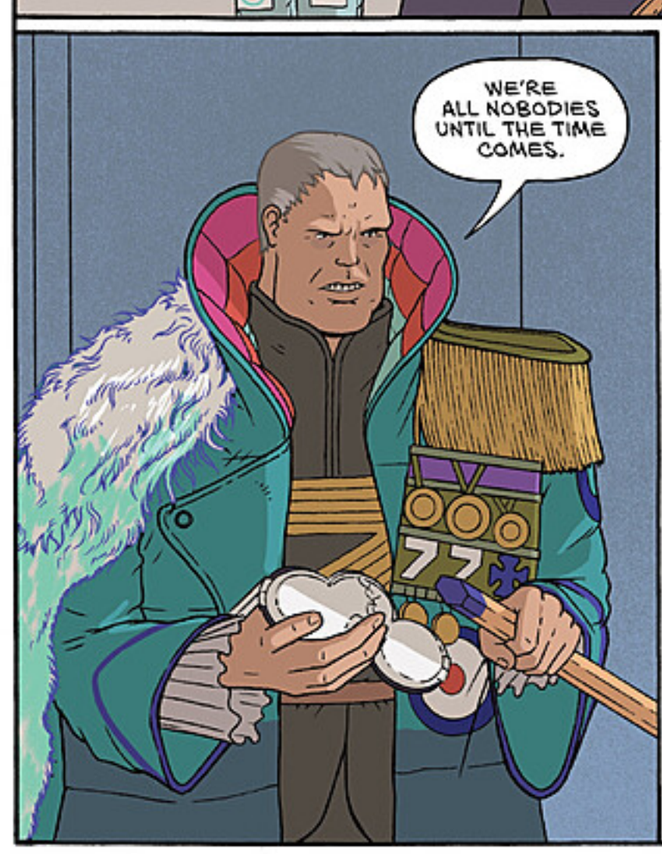


THE SHIELD IS HOLDING, MA'AM.
OF COURSE IT IS.

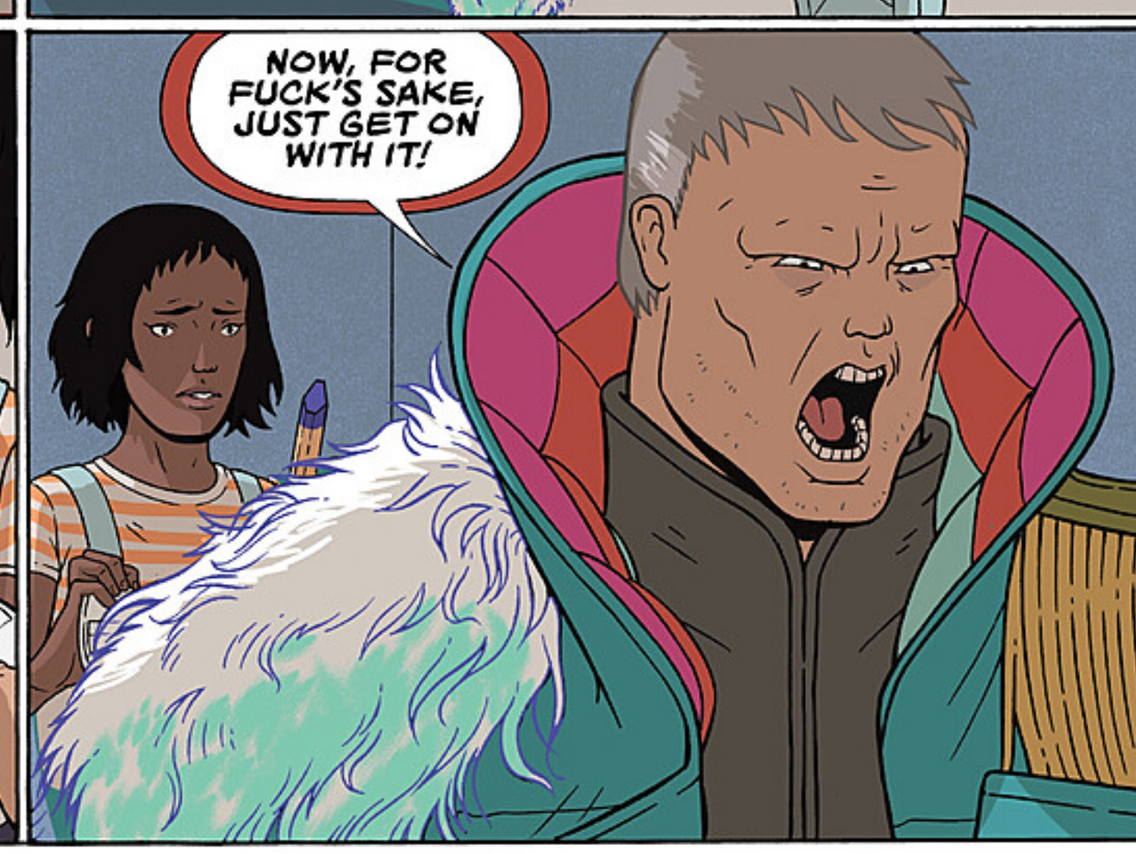

WE KEEP FIRING, DAY AND NIGHT, UNTIL IT FAILS.

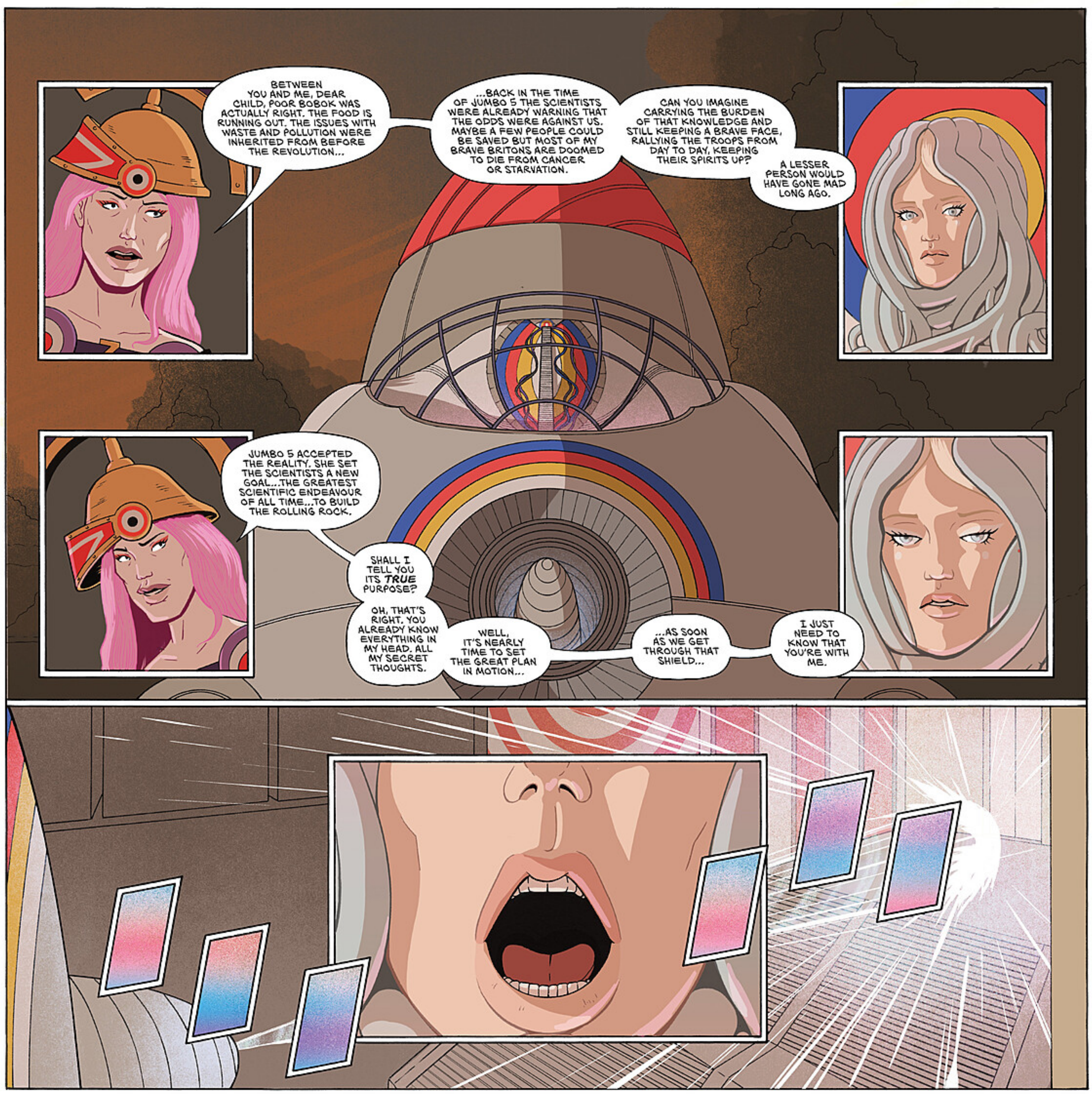
WHAT DO WE DO NOW? BOBBY'S DEAD AND THE SHIELD WON'T HOLD FOREVER.


WELL? WHAT DO WE DO?
I DON'T KNOW. BOBBY SAID I HAD TO TAKE HIS PLACE BUT HOW COULD I DO THAT? I'M NOBODY.


WE'RE ALL NOBODIES UNTIL THE TIME COMES.

BOBBY SAID TO GIVE YOU THESE. HE KNEW YOU WERE THE RIGHT ONE FOR THIS.

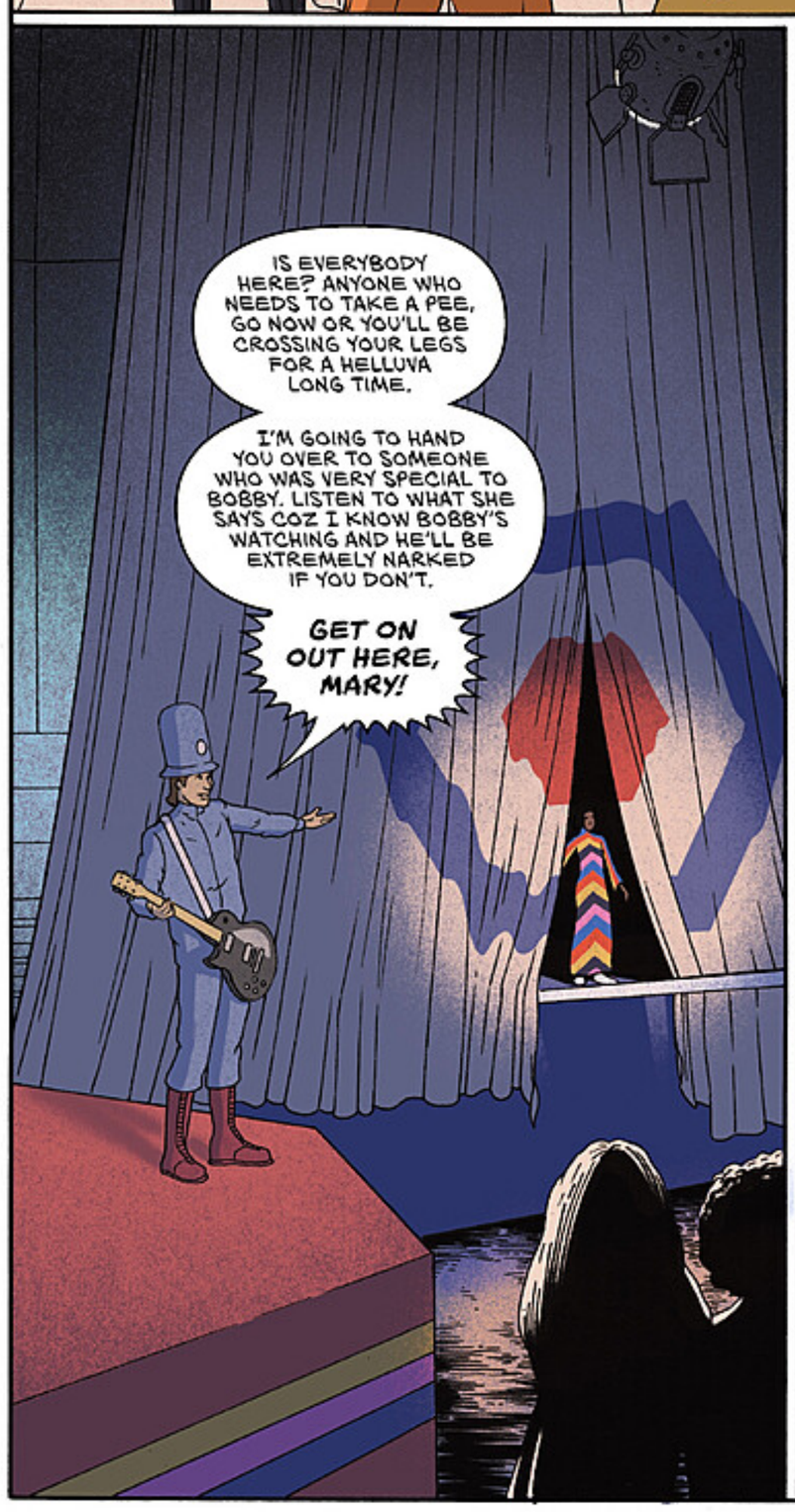

NOW, FOR FUCK'S SAKE, JUST GET ON WITH IT!

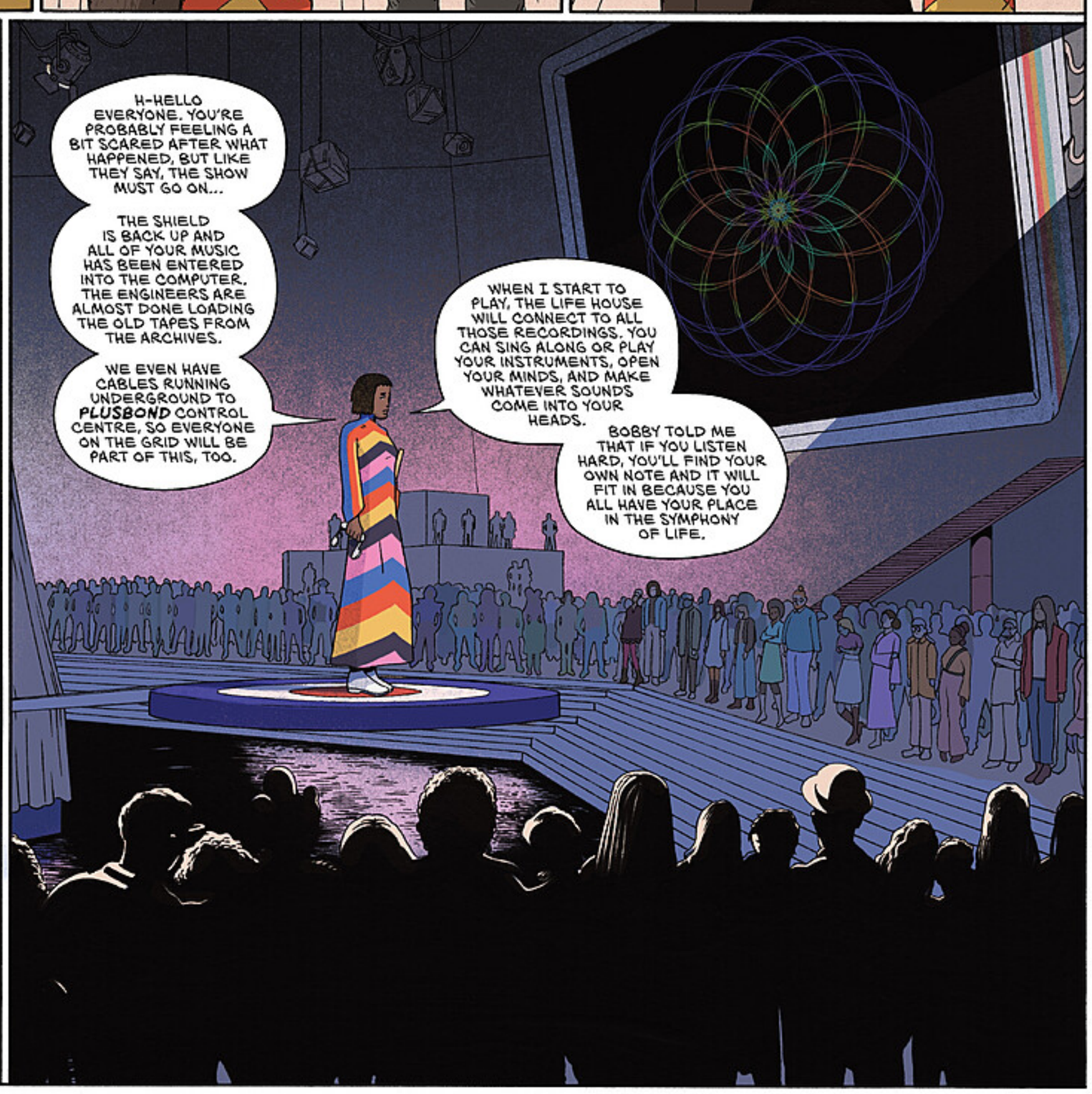

BETWEEN YOU AND ME, DEAR CHILD, POOR BOBOK WAS ACTUALLY RIGHT. THE FOOD IS RUNNING OUT. THE ISSUES WITH WASTE AND POLLUTION WERE INHERITED FROM BEFORE THE REVOLUTION...
...BACK IN THE TIME OF JUMBO 5 THE SCIENTISTS WERE ALREADY WARNING THAT THE ODDS WERE AGAINST US. MAYBE A FEW PEOPLE COULD BE SAVED BUT MOST OF MY BRAVE BRITONS ARE DOOMED TO DIE FROM CANCER OR STARVATION.
CAN YOU IMAGINE CARRYING THE BURDEN OF THAT KNOWLEDGE AND STILL KEEPING A BRAVE FACE, RALLYING THE TROOPS FROM DAY TO DAY, KEEPING THEIR SPIRITS UP?
A LESSER PERSON WOULD HAVE GONE MAD LONG AGO.
JUMBO 5 ACCEPTED THE REALITY. SHE SET THE SCIENTISTS A NEW GOAL...THE GREATEST SCIENTIFIC ENDEAVOUR OF ALL TIME...TO BUILD THE ROLLING ROCK.
SHALL I TELL YOU ITS TRUE PURPOSE?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. YOU ALREADY KNOW EVERYTHING IN MY HEAD. ALL MY SECRET THOUGHTS.
WELL, IT'S NEARLY TIME TO SET THE GREAT PLAN IN MOTION...
...AS SOON AS WE GET THROUGH THAT SHIELD...
I JUST NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU'RE WITH ME.

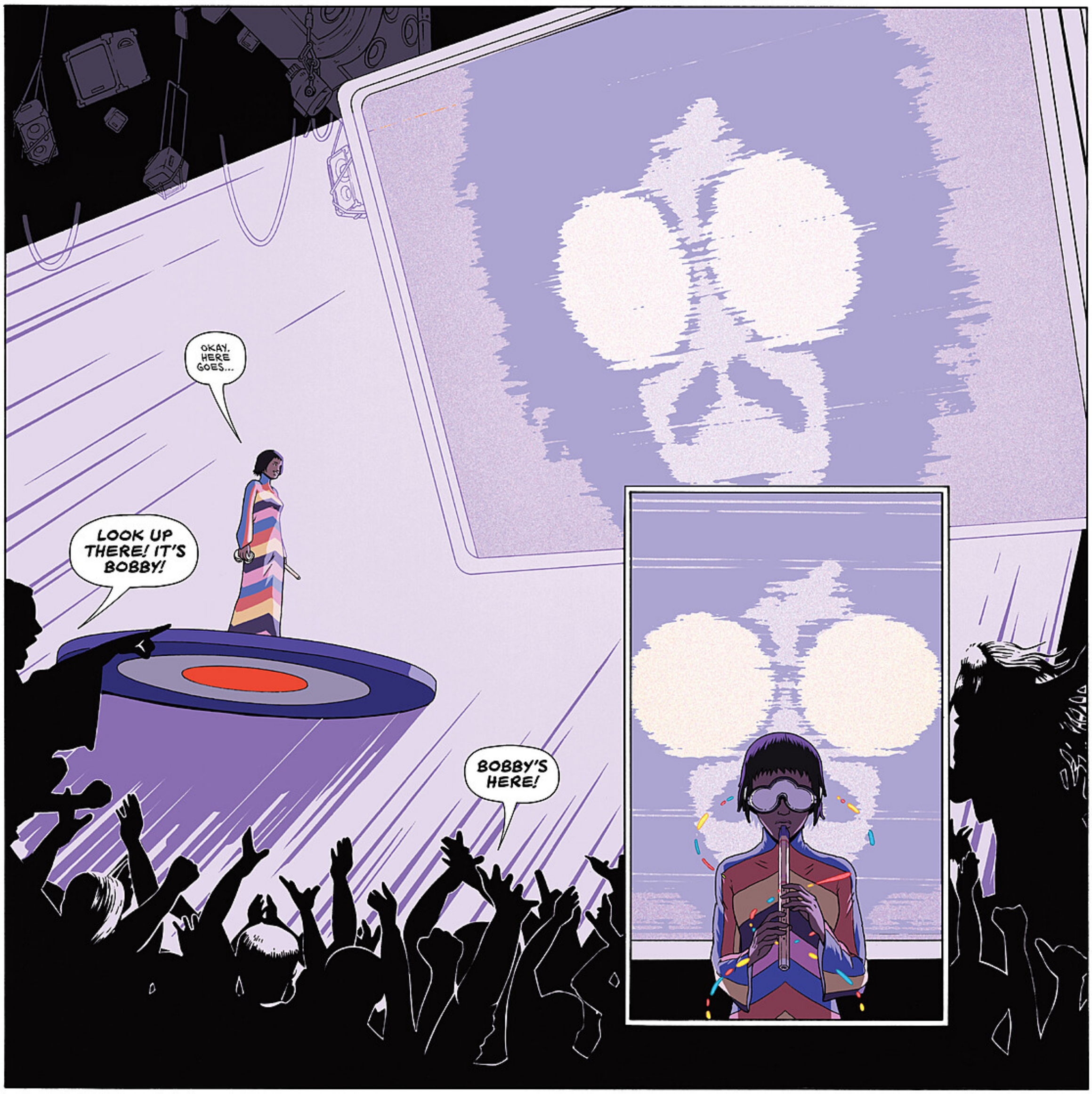
THE PLACE IS PACKED.
HAVE YOU GOT ALL THAT STRAIGHT THEN, YOUNG LADY? IT'S IMPORTANT THAT EVERY-ONE UNDERSTANDS WHAT WE'RE AIMING FOR.
YEAH, I THINK SO.

YOU'LL DO FINE.

I'M GLAD WE RAN INTO YOU, MARY. I WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED THIS FOR THE WORLD.


IS EVERYBODY HERE? ANYONE WHO NEEDS TO TAKE A PEE, GO NOW OR YOU'LL BE CROSSING YOUR LEGS FOR A HELLUVA LONG TIME.
I'M GOING TO HAND YOU OVER TO SOMEONE WHO WAS VERY SPECIAL TO BOBBY. LISTEN TO WHAT SHE SAYS COZ I KNOW BOBBY'S WATCHING AND HE'LL BE EXTREMELY NARKED IF YOU DON'T.
GET ON OUT HERE, MARY!


H-HELLO EVERYONE. YOU'RE PROBABLY FEELING A BIT SCARED AFTER WHAT HAPPENED, BUT LIKE THEY SAY, THE SHOW MUST GO ON...
THE SHIELD IS BACK UP AND ALL OF YOUR MUSIC HAS BEEN ENTERED INTO THE COMPUTER. THE ENGINEERS ARE ALMOST DONE LOADING THE OLD TAPES FROM THE ARCHIVES.
WE EVEN HAVE CABLES RUNNING UNDERGROUND TO PLUSBOND CONTROL CENTRE, SO EVERYONE ON THE GRID WILL BE PART OF THIS, TOO.
WHEN I START TO PLAY, THE LIFE HOUSE WILL CONNECT TO ALL THOSE RECORDINGS. YOU CAN SING ALONG OR PLAY YOUR INSTRUMENTS, OPEN YOUR MINDS, AND MAKE WHATEVER SOUNDS COME INTO YOUR HEADS.
BOBBY TOLD ME THAT IF YOU LISTEN HARD, YOU'LL FIND YOUR OWN NOTE AND IT WILL FIT IN BECAUSE YOU ALL HAVE YOUR PLACE IN THE SYMPHONY OF LIFE.


OKAY, HERE GOES...
LOOK UP THERE! IT'S BOBBY!
BOBBY'S HERE!

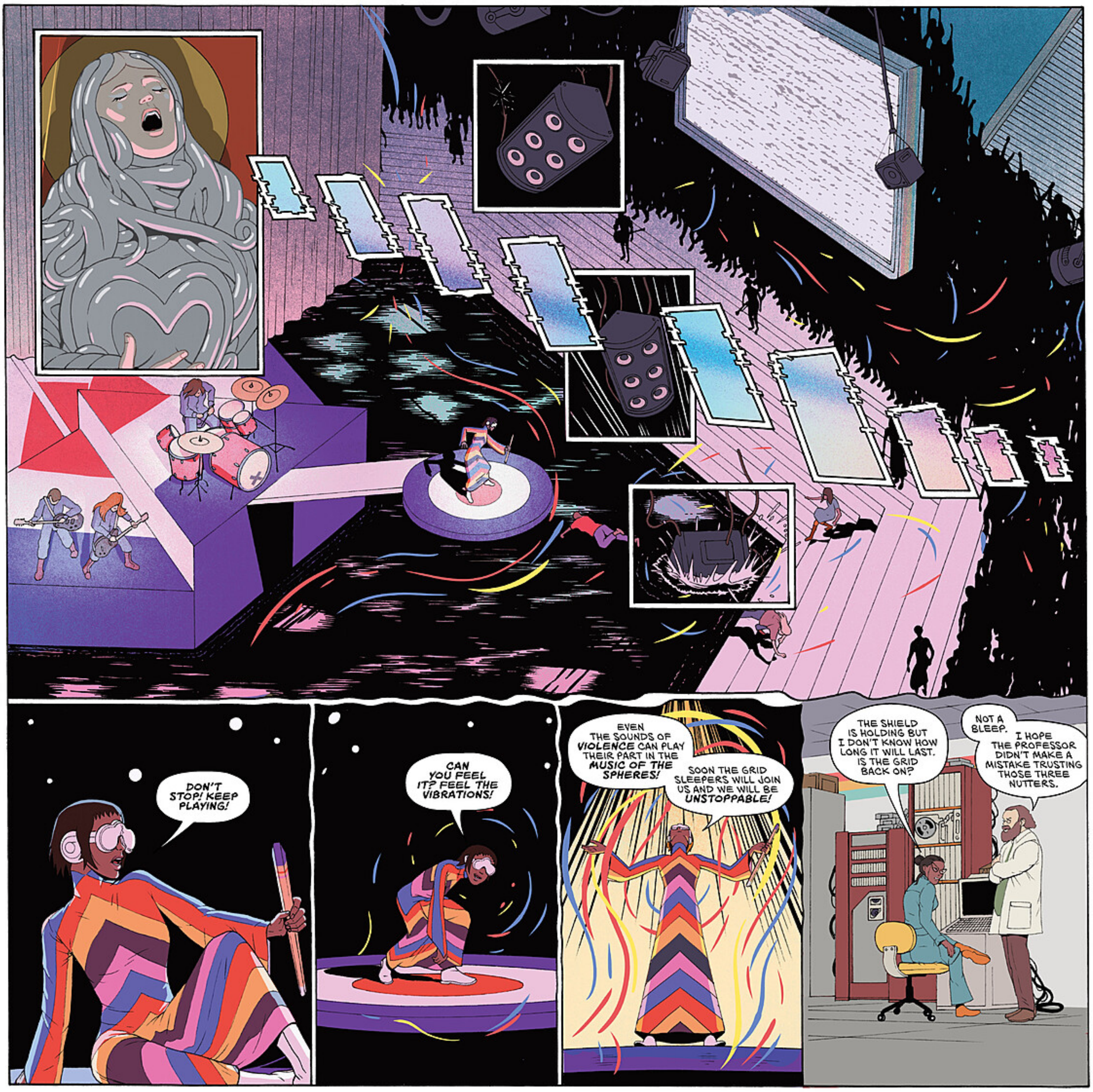
MR. BRICK?
THAT'S GENERAL BRICK, YOU PENCIL-PUSHING EGGHEAD.
WHAT DO YOU WANT? I'M TRYING TO ENJOY THE MUSIC.
AH. RIGHT. LOOK, WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
WE'RE NEARLY DONE LOADING THE ANALOGUE TAPES BUT...
...THE CONNECTION TO THE GRID. IT'S BEEN WORKING FINE. I TESTED IT ONLY THIS MORNING, BUT...
SPIT IT OUT!
IT--IT'S BEEN CUT OFF. IT'S DEAD!
JUMBO. SHE KNEW WHAT BOBBY WAS UP TO.
SOME-ONE WILL HAVE TO GO TO PLUSBOND.
I KNOW HOW TO RECONNECT THE GRID BUT I'M GOING TO NEED SOMEONE TO GET ME IN. SOMEONE TO PROTECT ME.
WELL, THAT'S ME. OBVIOUSLY.
I NEED TWO VOLUNTEERS. CAN YOU DRIVE?
ABSOLUTELY.
OPEN THE BARRIER. WE'RE GOING OUT.
YOU LEAVING THE PARTY?
NOT YOU, RASTUS. NO WALKIES FOR YOU TODAY.
YOU WAIT HERE AND I'LL BE BACK SOON. PROMISE.
MY JEEP IS OUTSIDE.
I THINK WE CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT.

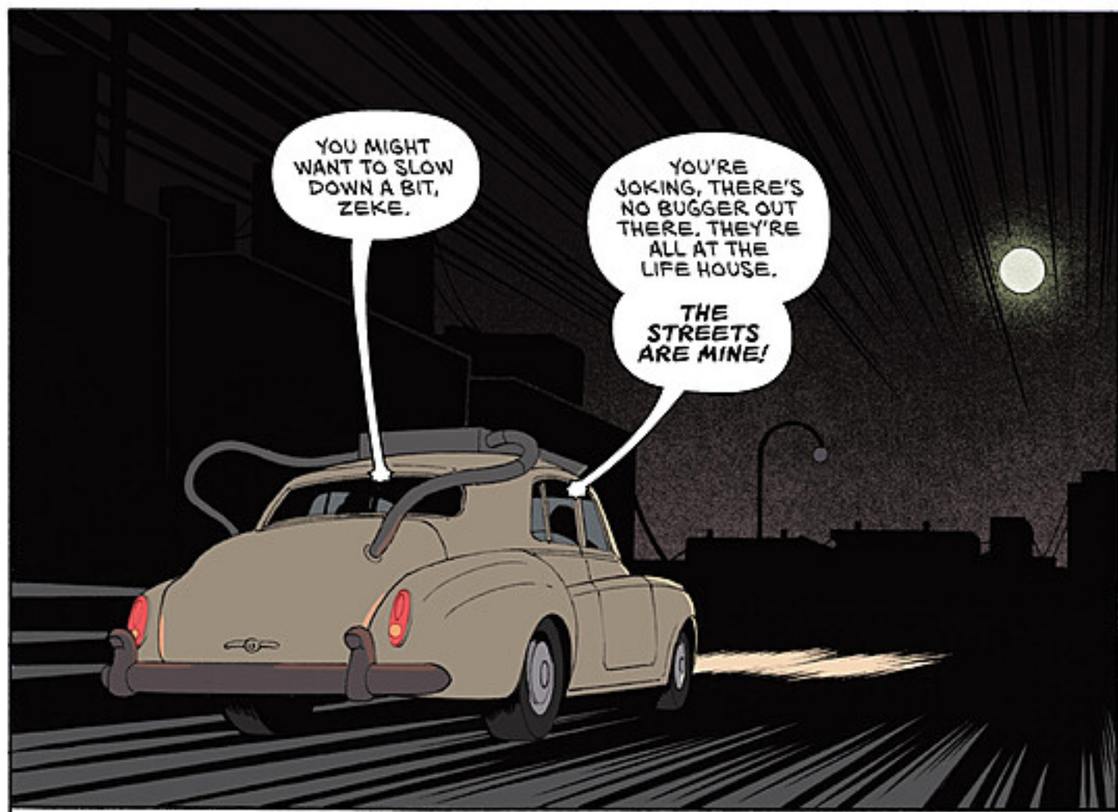
"THIS NIGHT WILL BECOME A LEGEND. THE FINAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE *OLD WORLD* AND THE *NEW ORDER*.

"WHAT A SIGHT THIS IS, THE CHILDREN OF BRITANNIA, DANCING AROUND THEIR BONFIRES LIKE KIDS ON GUY FAWKES NIGHT, READY TO DIE FOR *GOD, JUMBO*, AND *EMPIRE!*"

NOTHING CAN STOP ME NOW!

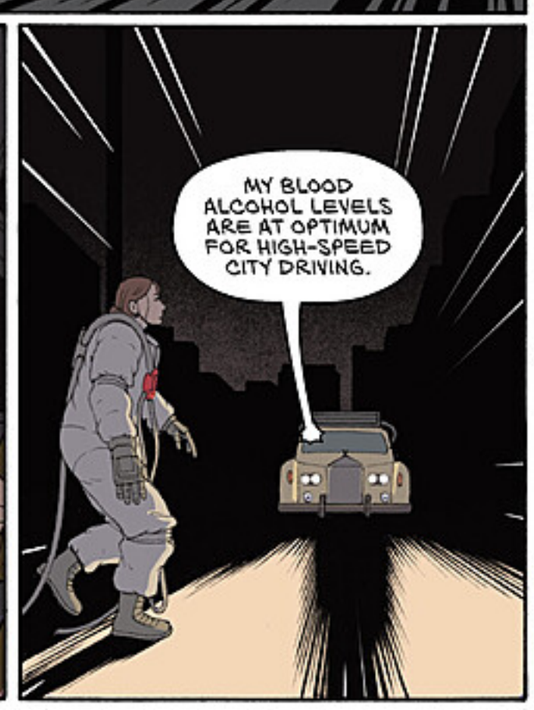
UNDERGROUND


DON'T STOP! KEEP PLAYING!
CAN YOU FEEL IT? FEEL THE VIBRATIONS!
EVEN THE SOUNDS OF VIOLENCE CAN PLAY THEIR PART IN THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES!
SOON THE GRID SLEEPERS WILL JOIN US AND WE WILL BE UNSTOPPABLE!
THE SHIELD IS HOLDING BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG IT WILL LAST. IS THE GRID BACK ON?
NOT A BLEEP.
I HOPE THE PROFESSOR DIDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE TRUSTING THOSE THREE NUTTERS.

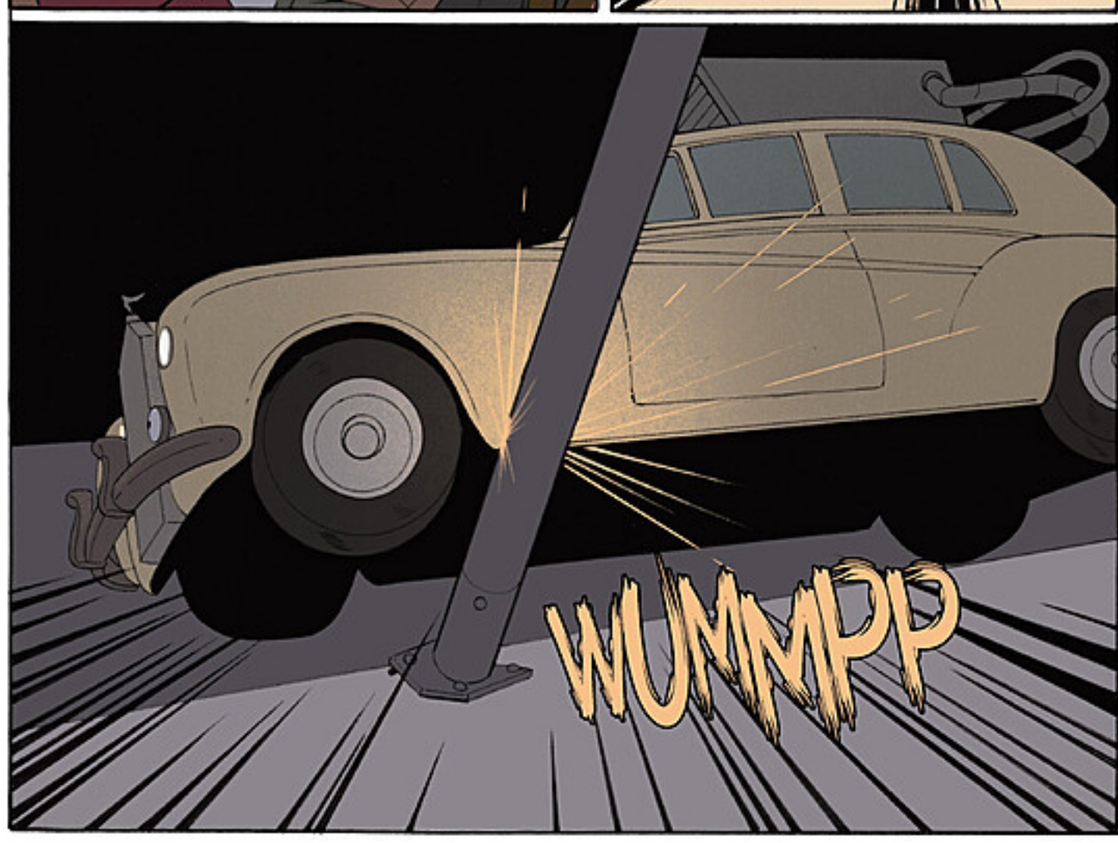

YOU MIGHT WANT TO SLOW DOWN A BIT, ZEKE.
YOU'RE JOKING, THERE'S NO BUGGER OUT THERE. THEY'RE ALL AT THE LIFE HOUSE.
THE STREETS ARE MINE!

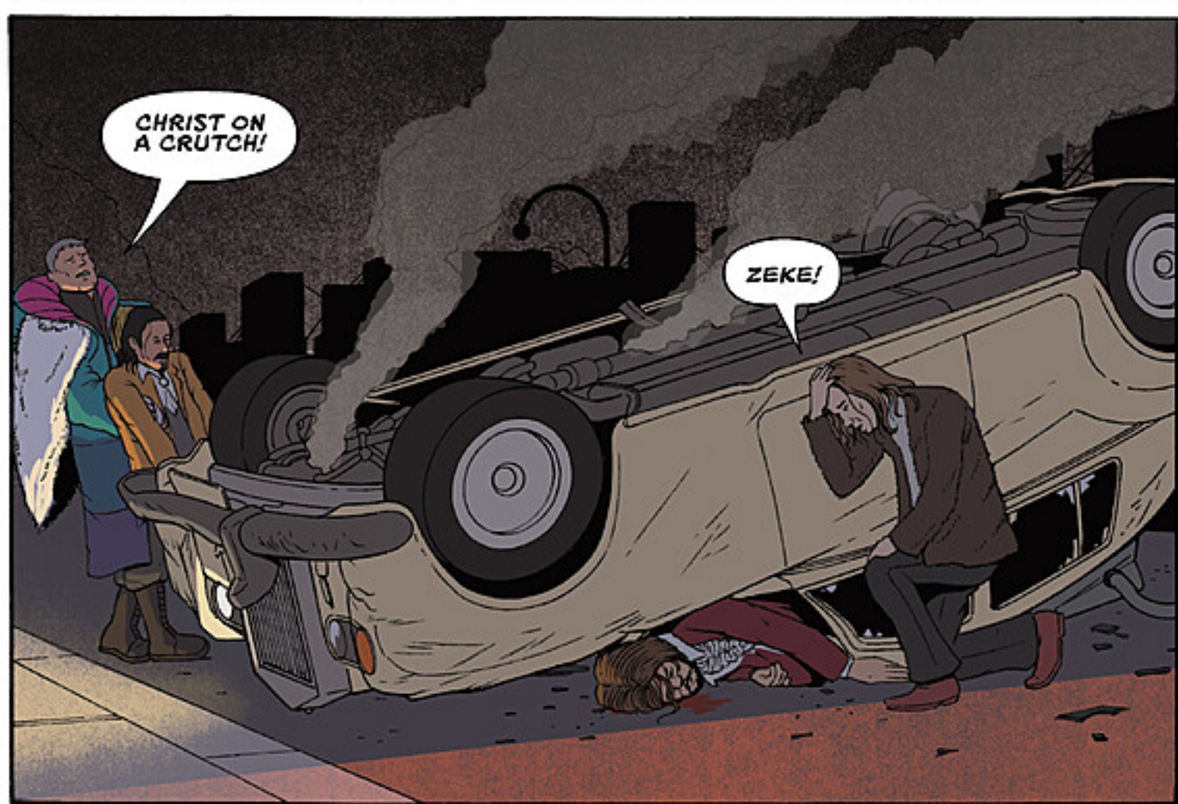
YOU SHOULD PROBABLY GO EASY ON THE BOOZE TOO, MATE.

HENRY, YOU LIGHTWEIGHT, I AM BARELY HALF-PISSED.

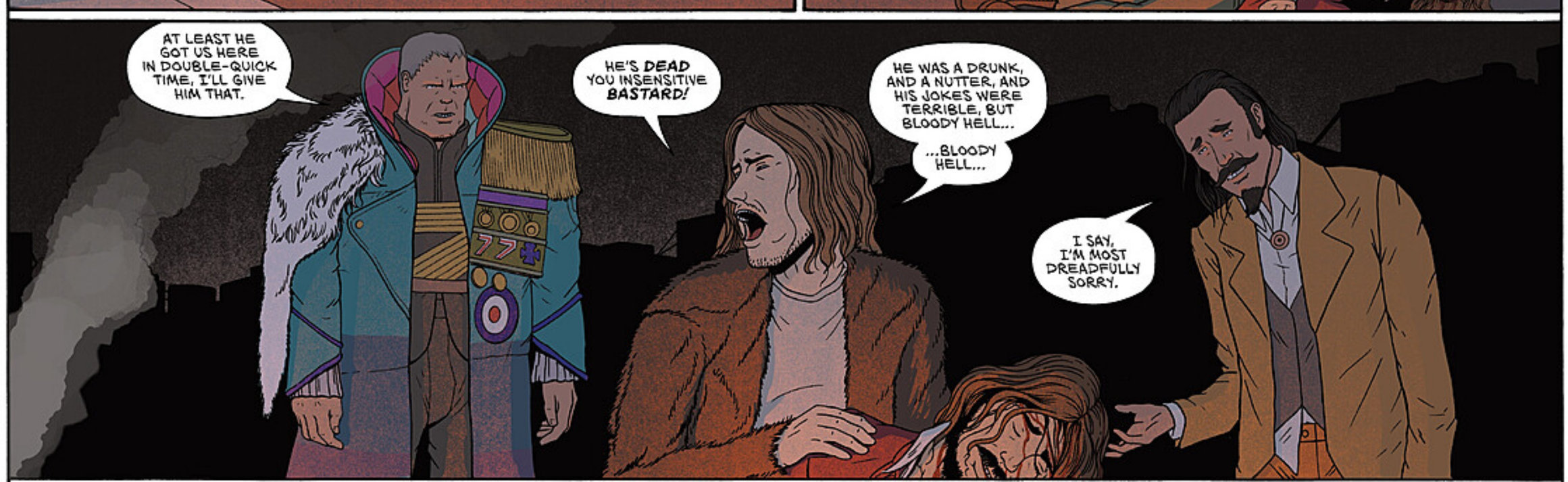

MY BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVELS ARE AT OPTIMUM FOR HIGH-SPEED CITY DRIVING.

LOOK OUT, YOU TWAT!
SHIT! WHERE DID SHE COME FROM?


WUMMPP

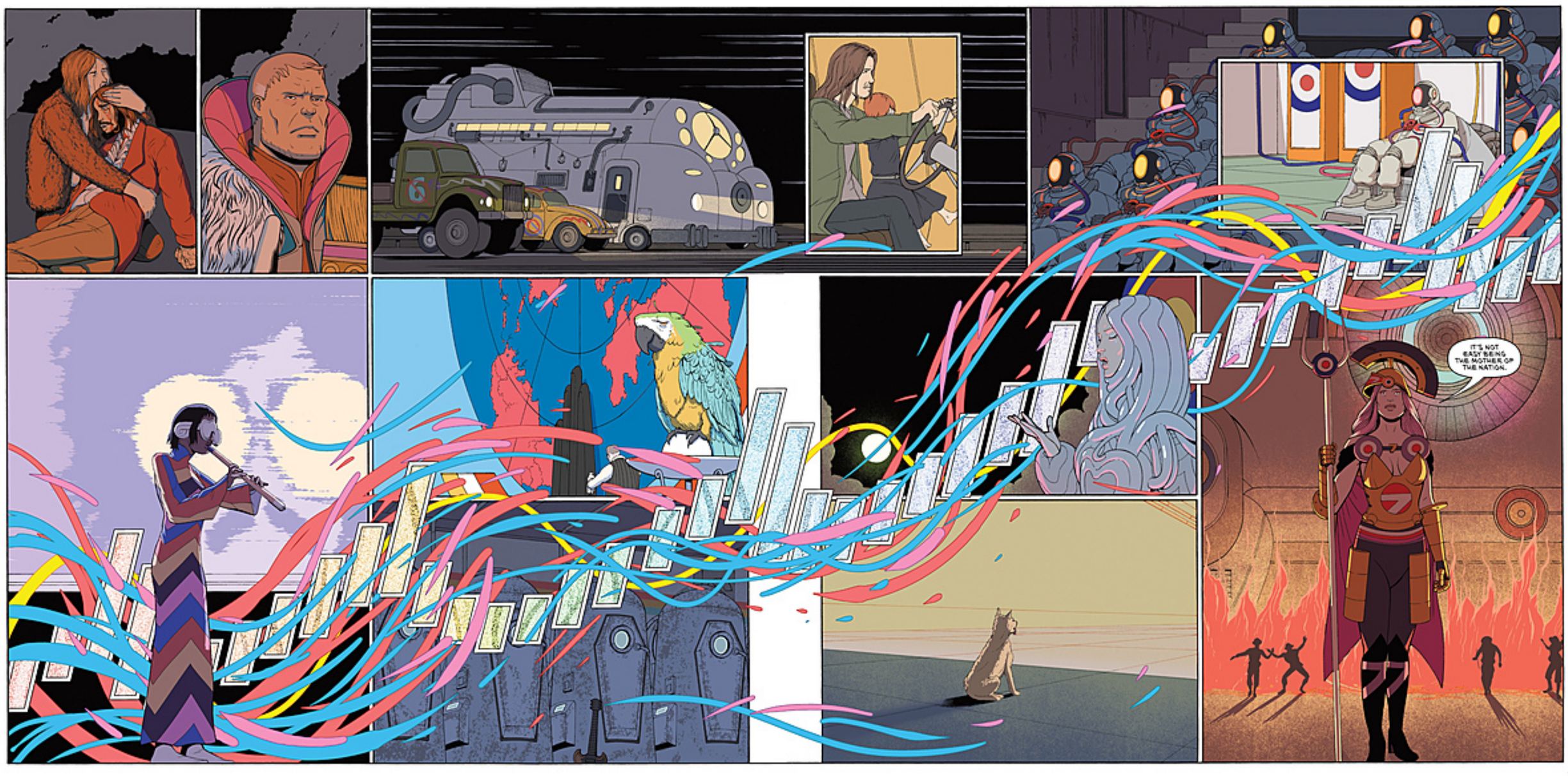

CHRIST ON A CRUTCH!
ZEKE!

WHERE DID HE LEARN TO DRIVE? THE INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND?
OH DEAR.
ZEKE, OH DEAR GOD. LOOK AT YOU, YOU IDIOT, ALL BUSTED UP.


AT LEAST HE GOT US HERE IN DOUBLE-QUICK TIME, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT.
HE'S DEAD YOU INSENSITIVE BASTARD!
HE WAS A DRUNK, AND A NUTTER, AND HIS JOKES WERE TERRIBLE, BUT BLOODY HELL...
...BLOODY HELL...
I SAY, I'M MOST DREADFULLY SORRY.

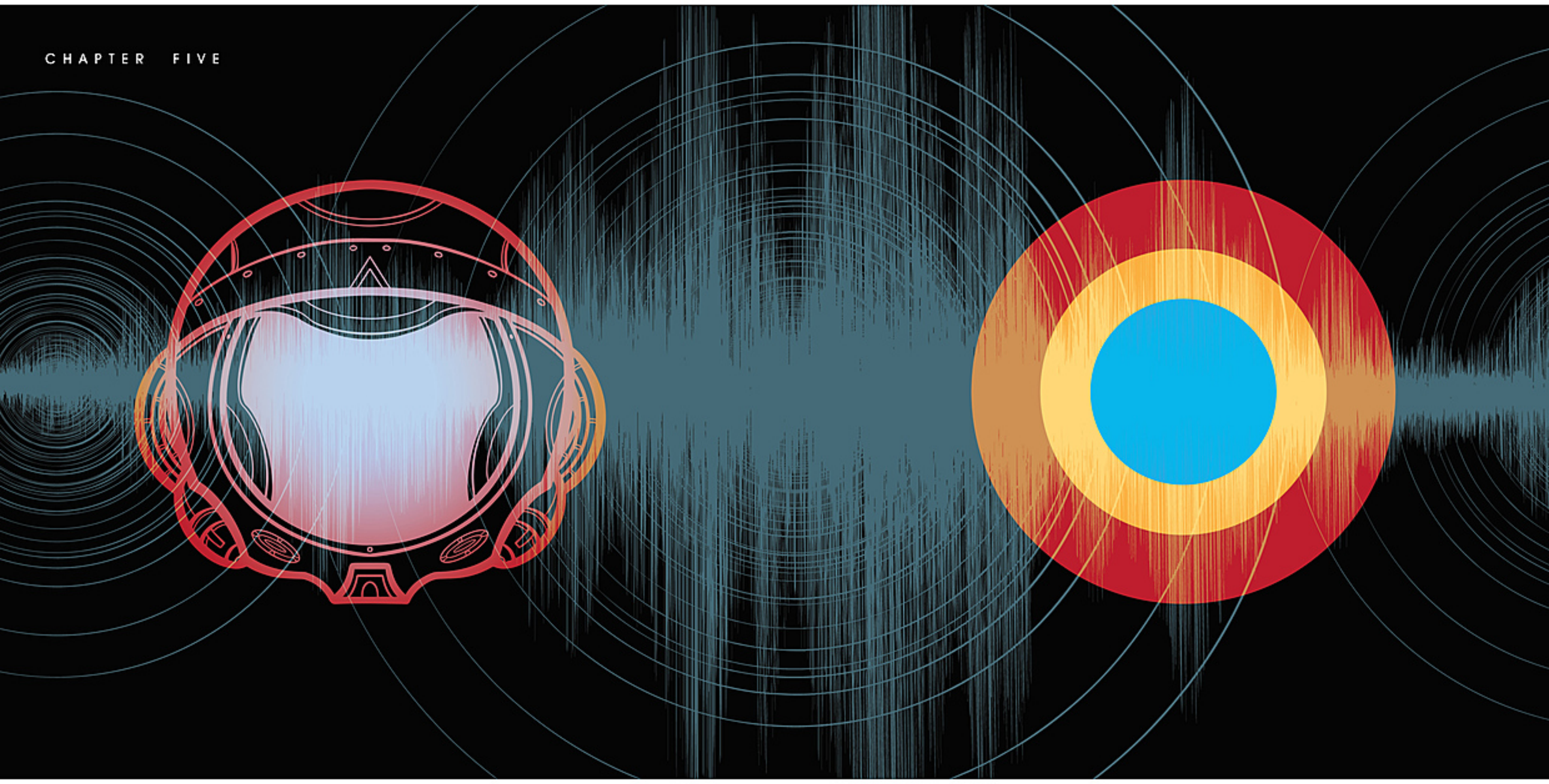
ALL RIGHT, I'LL MAKE SURE HE GETS A MEDAL. A NICE BIG SHINY ONE.
NOW LET'S GET A MOVE ON.
UM, GENTLEMEN, I THINK WE HAVE COMPANY.

OH, FUCK A DUCK!


IT'S NOT EASY BEING THE MOTHER OF THE NATION.

YOU KNOW WHO I AM, SO LOWER THOSE WEAPONS OR I WILL PERSONALLY INSERT THEM WHERE NONE BUT YOUR SPECIAL FRIENDS HAVE GONE BEFORE.
UP YOURS, BRICK.
I'LL DEAL WITH YOU LATER, YOU SUICIDAL LITTLE PILLOCK.
JUST GET OUT OF MY WAY. WE'VE GOT BUSINESS INSIDE.
OH YEAH?
RAISE YOUR HANDS OR I WILL SHOOT YOU THROUGH THE FACE.
OH, YOU ARE DEFINITELY TIRED OF LIFE.
SEE THIS HAT? YOU'VE BEEN REPLACED.
JUMBO HAS MADE ME GENERAL AND CHIEF OF STAFF SINCE YOU WENT AWOL.
SHE LEFT STRICT INSTRUCTIONS IN CASE YOU SHOWED YOUR UGLY MUG HERE AGAIN...
...YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR TREASON, CORRUPTION, AND MURDER.

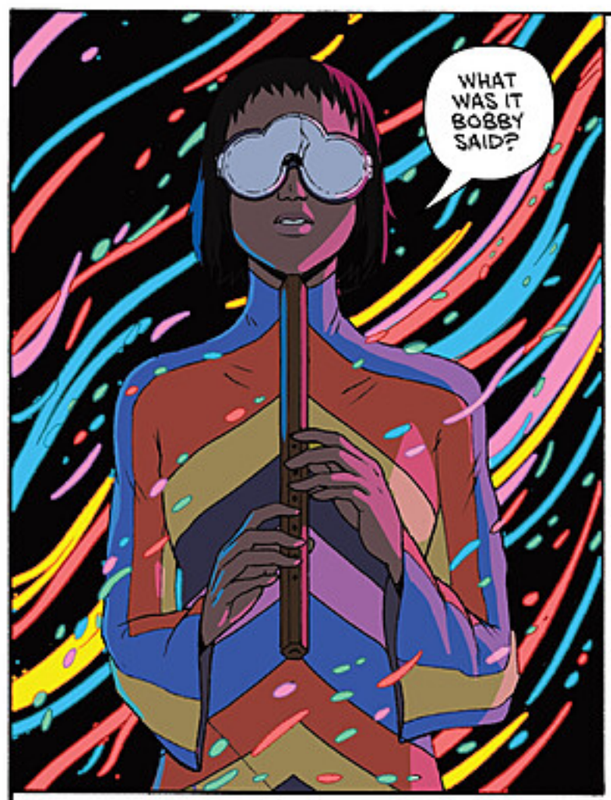
CHAPTER FIVE



HOW ARE WE DOING WITH LOADING THE TAPES?
ALMOST FINISHED. WE'RE DOWN TO THE LAST HALF-DOZEN.
SALLY KEEPS CALLING ON BOBBY'S PHONE. SHE'S ASKING FOR HIM. WHAT SHOULD I TELL HER?
WHO'S SALLY?
I'M AFRAID BOBBY ER...HE ISN'T AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW. THE CONCERT HAS BEGUN...YES, IT'S GOING WELL.
WHO ARE YOU AGAIN?
SLIP KIDS? YE-ES, I'VE HEARD OF THEM. SO YOU'RE HEADING HERE, TO THE LIFE HOUSE?
I WONDER IF YOU COULD STOP BY JUMBO'S PALACE? IT'S ON YOUR WAY.
YOU NEED TO FIND SOMEONE CALLED BRICK. HE'S WITH THE PROFESSOR AND THEY MAY NEED YOUR HELP.

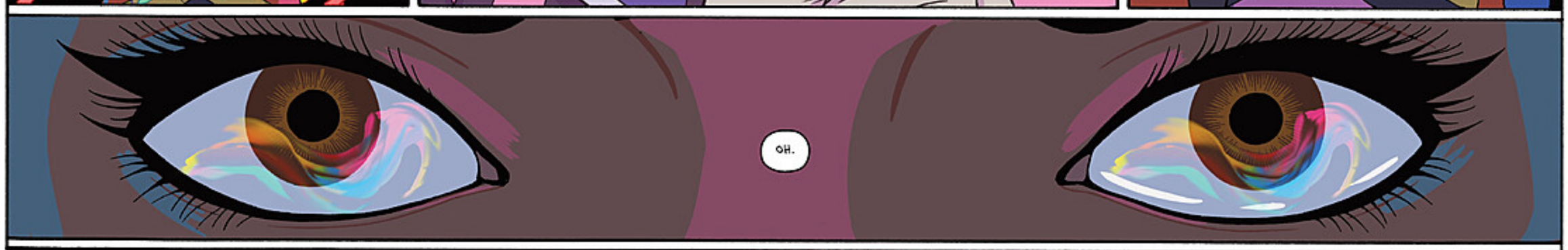
YOU KNOW WHAT? I THINK I'LL JUST HAVE YOU ALL SHOT ANYWAY...
...FOR TRYING TO ESCAPE.
FUCK ME! THE LITTLE PILLOCK MAY JUST BE OFFICER MATERIAL AFTER ALL.
WHAT THE BLOODY 'ELL IS THAT?
IS ONE OF YOU CALLED BRICK?
THAT'S GENERAL BRICK TO YOU, SUNSHINE.
WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
HE'S RAY. I'M SALLY AND THESE ARE THE SLIP KIDS.
YEAH, AND WE DON'T LIKE JUMBO OR HER TOY SOLDIERS.
WHO WANTS TO SURRENDER AND WHO WANTS THEIR HEADS BASHED IN?
I'LL TAKE THAT.
YOU CAN KEEP THE HAT.
COME ON, PROFESSOR, YOU'VE GOT WORK TO DO.
YOU TOO, HENRY.

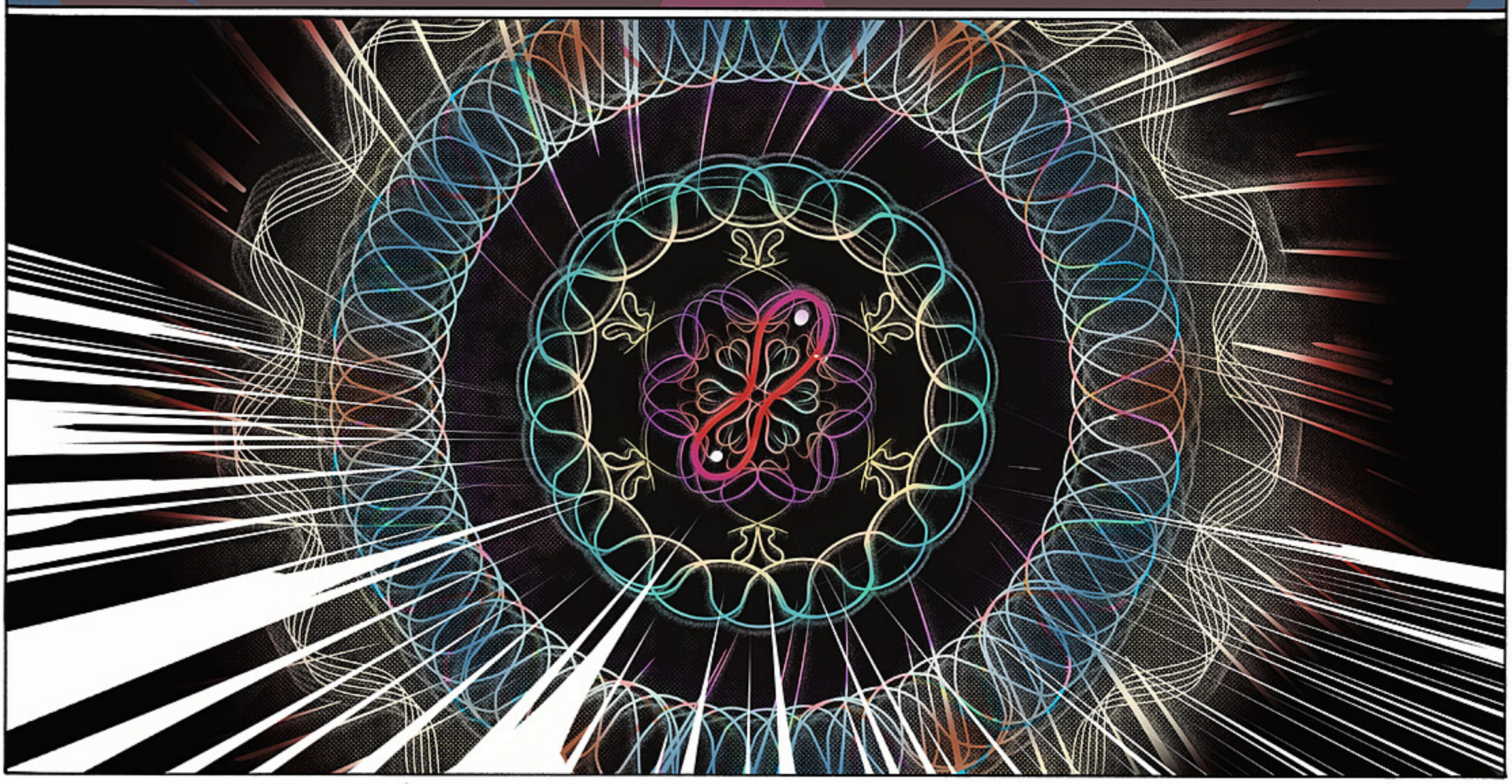
LET'S CHECK OUT THE ROYAL DIGS!
JUST BE READY TO LEAVE WHEN BRICK AND THE PROFESSOR ARE DONE HERE.
CAN WE GO SEE JUMBO'S PALACE TOO?
I THINK WE SHOULD STAY HERE.
AW, MOM! YOU NEVER LET US DO ANYTHING.
AH, SOD IT! COME ON THEN, BUT MAKE SURE YOU STICK TOGETHER.
ALL FOR ONE!
AND ONE FOR ALL!
SO THIS IS HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES.
THIS IS SOME FREAKY SHIT.
HOW LONG WAS I ASLEEP? I'VE HAD SUCH A CURIOUS DREAM.
WHAT IS THAT THING?
I THINK IT'S A BIRD.
WHY IS IT SO UGLY?
BLOODY KIDS! PAAAARRRPP!
THAT'S THE HUB THAT CONNECTS THE GRID NETWORK TO THE LIFE HOUSE.
YOU ARE JOKING!
IT'S COMPLETELY BUGGERED!
NO LOITERING
NO PROBLEM, I BROUGHT MY SCREWDRIVER.


WHAT WAS IT BOBBY SAID?

TRY TO IMAGINE WHAT THE SOUNDS LOOK LIKE.

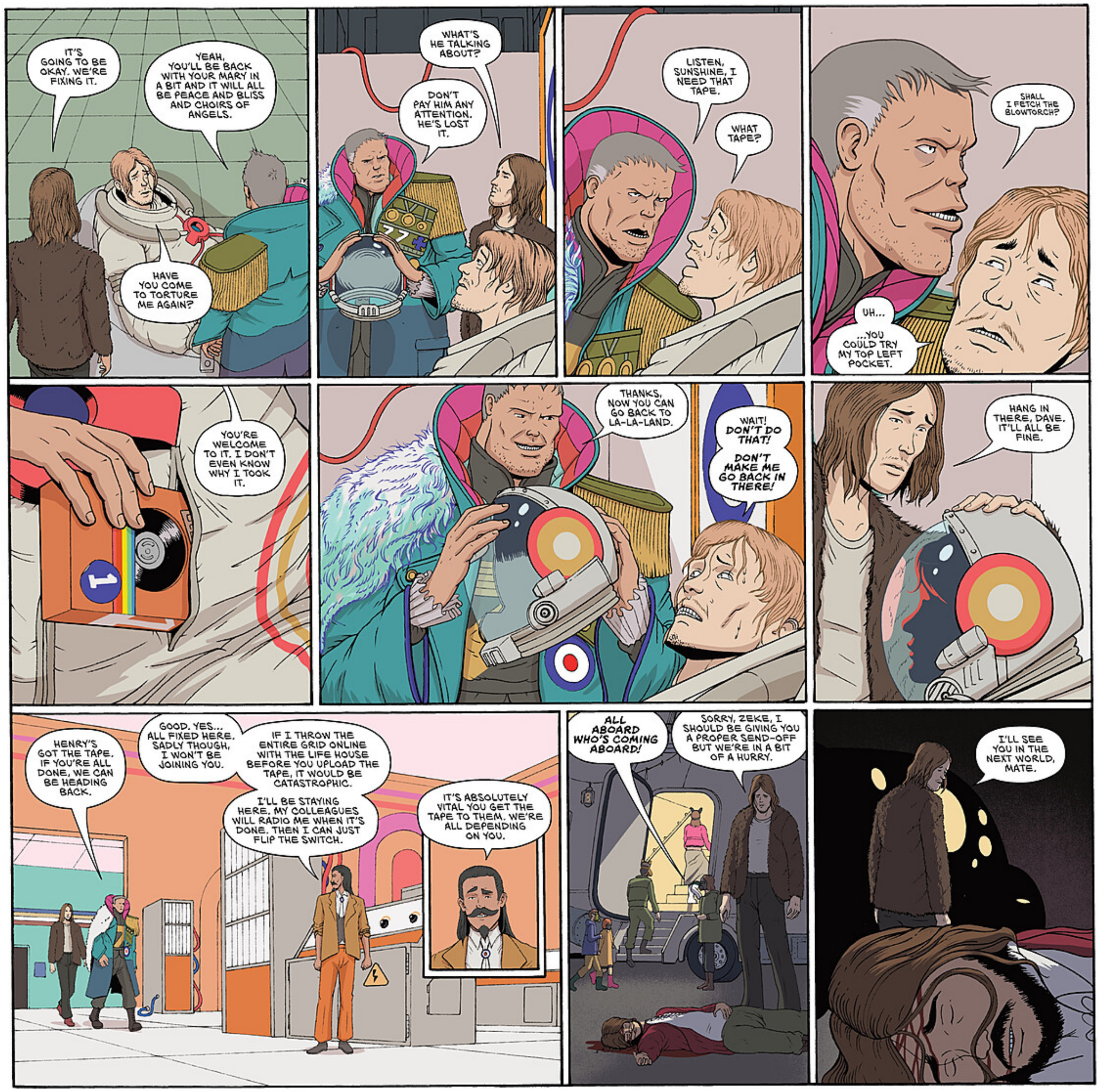
I DON'T NEED THIS ANYMORE. I WANT TO SEE WITH MY OWN EYES.

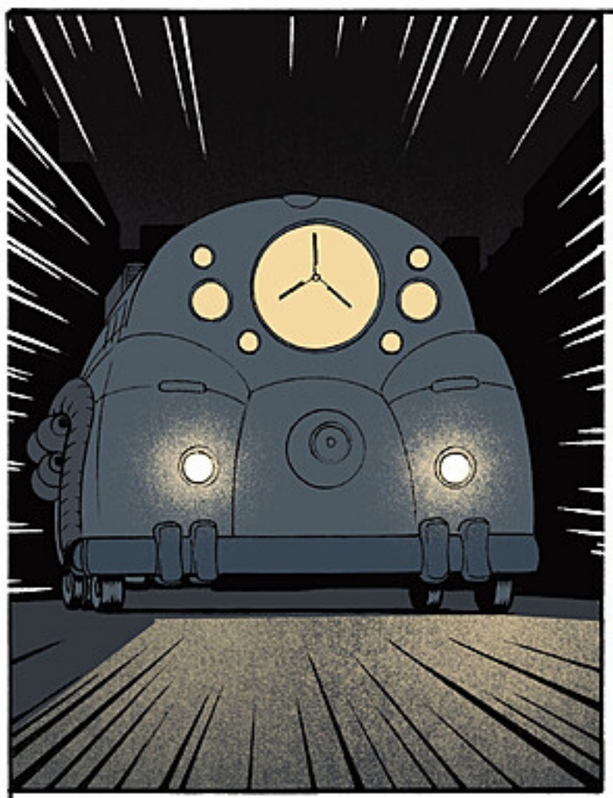

OH.

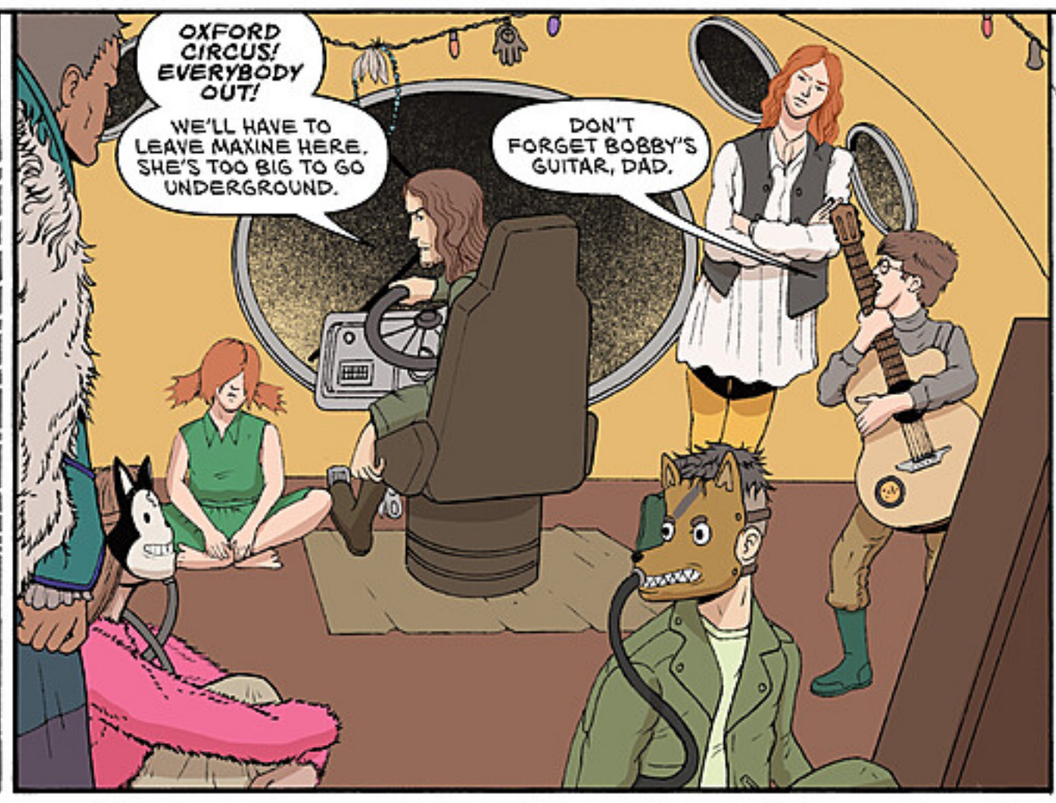


WE'RE GETTING CLOSE TO THE END. MARY SEEMS TO HAVE REACHED AN ALMOST SYMBIOTIC UNION WITH THE LIFE HOUSE.
DON'T START CELEBRATING YET. WE NEED TO CONTACT THE PROFESSOR. ONE OF THE TAPES IS MISSING.
I'M NEARLY DONE HERE. SURELY ONE TAPE OUT OF THOUSANDS CAN'T MATTER THAT MUCH.
AH.
APPARENTLY, IT'S THE VERY FIRST TAPE BOBBY EVER RECORDED OF SOMEONE'S LIFELINE MELODY.
MARY'S EX TOOK IT. THAT BLOKE DAVE.
HE COULD BE ANYWHERE.
AUXXXXKK!
WHO'S A PRETTY BOY THEN?
AHEM... IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR DAVE, WE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.
YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS?
LEAD THE WAY THEN, YOU LOVELY LITTLE MAN.
ISN'T THAT A SURPRISE, SIR? IT APPEARS THAT EVEN INSIGNIFICANT BIT PLAYERS LIKE YOU AND I HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY AFTER ALL.
BOLLLOCCCKKSSSS! WHERE'S MY DINNER?

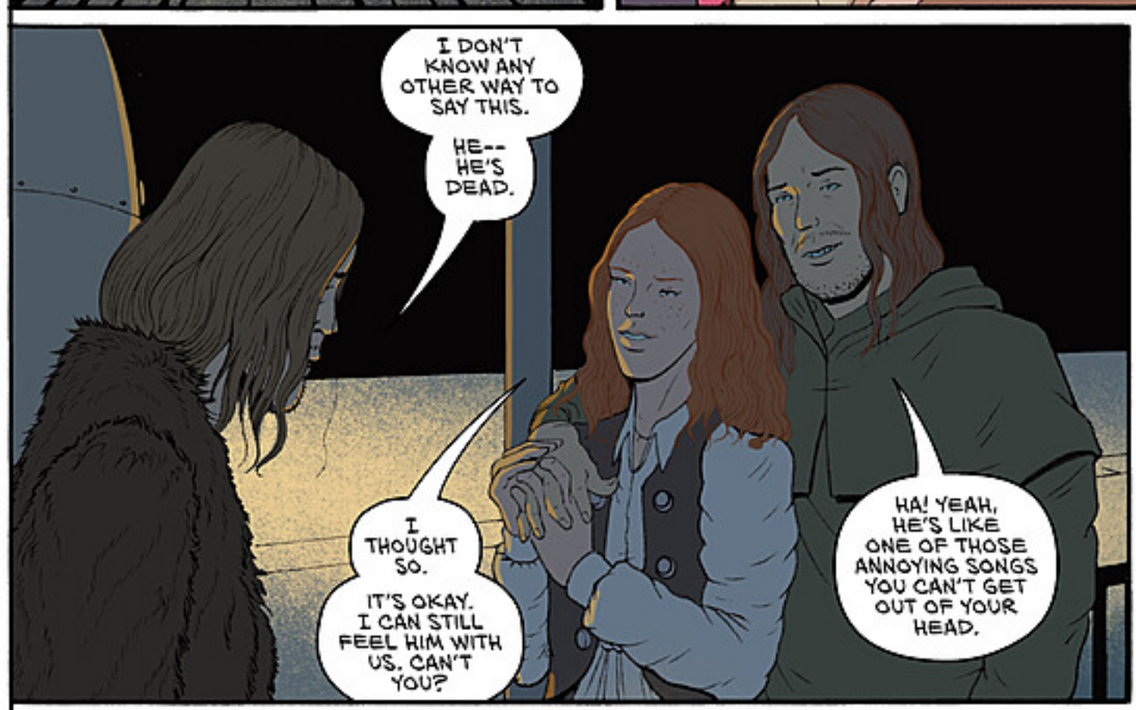
LOOK AT THAT. I DIDN'T EXPECT HIM TO RETURN TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.
WHAT CRIME?
NOTHING. JUST MY LITTLE JOKE.
LET'S GET THE HELMET OFF HIM.
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO... I DON'T KNOW... EASE HIM OUT OF IT?
NO TIME FOR THAT. BESIDES, HE'S NOT A SOFTIE ANYMORE, ARE YOU, DAVE?
AAAAAHHHHHH!
"OH GOD! IT'S HELL IN THERE!
"KARMADEATH EVERYWHERE!
"EVERYONE ELSE'S NIGHTMARES BLEEDING INTO MY HEAD!"


IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY. WE'RE FIXING IT.
YEAH, YOU'LL BE BACK WITH YOUR MARY IN A BIT AND IT WILL ALL BE PEACE AND BLISS AND CHOIRS OF ANGELS.
HAVE YOU COME TO TORTURE ME AGAIN?
WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?
DON'T PAY HIM ANY ATTENTION. HE'S LOST IT.
LISTEN, SUNSHINE, I NEED THAT TAPE.
WHAT TAPE?
SHALL I FETCH THE BLOWTORCH?
UH...
...YOU COULD TRY MY TOP LEFT POCKET.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO IT. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY I TOOK IT.
THANKS, NOW YOU CAN GO BACK TO LA-LA-LAND.
WAIT! DON'T DO THAT!
DON'T MAKE ME GO BACK IN THERE!
HANG IN THERE, DAVE. IT'LL ALL BE FINE.
HENRY'S GOT THE TAPE. IF YOU'RE ALL DONE, WE CAN BE HEADING BACK.
GOOD. YES... ALL FIXED HERE. SADLY THOUGH, I WON'T BE JOINING YOU.
IF I THROW THE ENTIRE GRID ONLINE WITH THE LIFE HOUSE BEFORE YOU UPLOAD THE TAPE, IT WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC.
I'LL BE STAYING HERE. MY COLLEAGUES WILL RADIO ME WHEN IT'S DONE. THEN I CAN JUST FLIP THE SWITCH.
IT'S ABSOLUTELY VITAL YOU GET THE TAPE TO THEM. WE'RE ALL DEPENDING ON YOU.
ALL ABOARD WHO'S COMING ABOARD!
SORRY, ZEKE, I SHOULD BE GIVING YOU A PROPER SEND-OFF BUT WE'RE IN A BIT OF A HURRY.
I'LL SEE YOU IN THE NEXT WORLD, MATE.




OXFORD CIRCUS! EVERYBODY OUT!
WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE MAXINE HERE. SHE'S TOO BIG TO GO UNDERGROUND.
DON'T FORGET BOBBY'S GUITAR, DAD.

BEFORE WE GO IN, THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU...ABOUT BOBBY.
TUBE
OXFORD CIRCUS


I DON'T KNOW ANY OTHER WAY TO SAY THIS.
HE-- HE'S DEAD.
I THOUGHT SO.
IT'S OKAY. I CAN STILL FEEL HIM WITH US. CAN'T YOU?
HA! YEAH, HE'S LIKE ONE OF THOSE ANNOYING SONGS YOU CAN'T GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD.

JUST IN TIME! I'D ABOUT GIVEN UP ON YOU.
ARFF

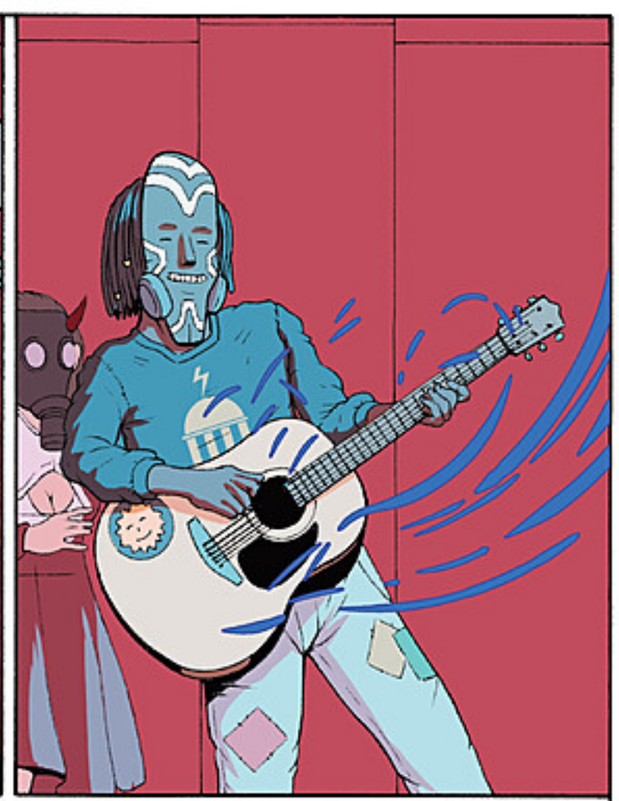
HEY, BOY! GOOD DOG!
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ZEKE AREN'T YOU?

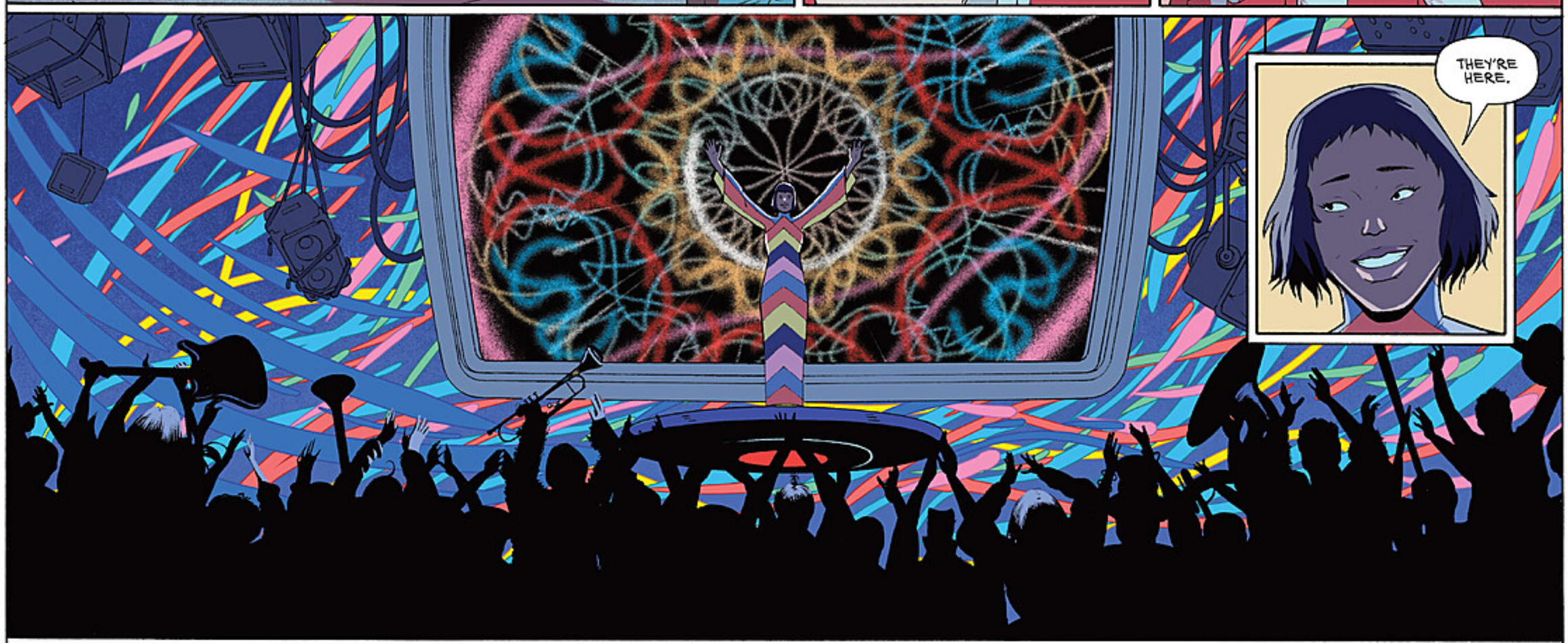
ZEKE WON'T BE COMING BACK AND...HE WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO WAIT FOR HIM.
HE'S... GONE TO A BETTER PLACE, Y'KNOW?

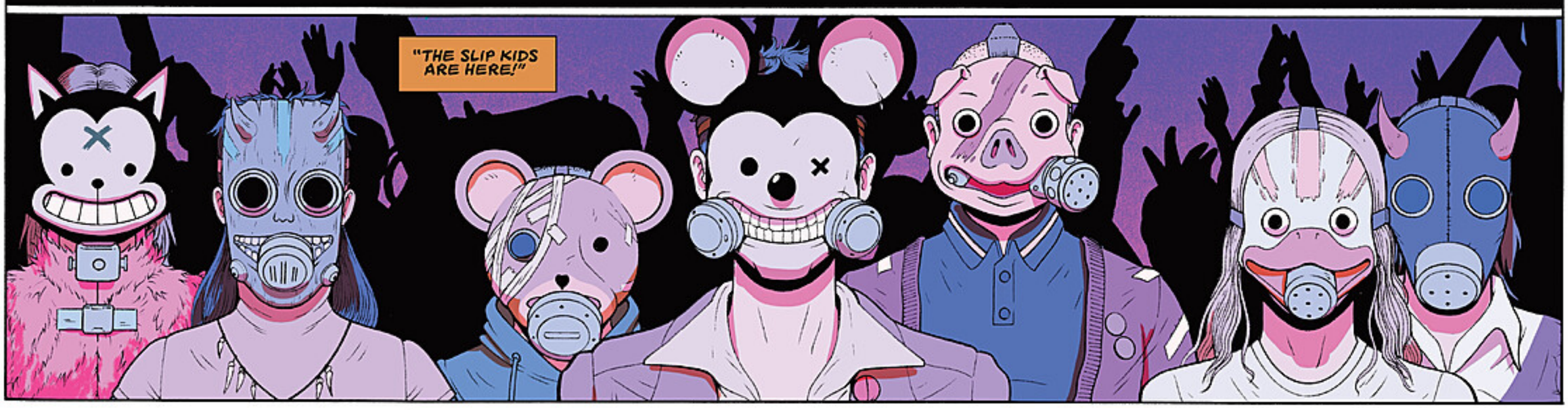
CHRIST, I'M SHIT AT THIS.

HEY! ANY OF YOU LOT PLAY GUITAR?
GUITAR? TOO RIGHT!

I HAVEN'T SEEN A GUITAR FOR YEARS.
THE ONE MY UNCLE TAUGHT ME ON WAS INVOLVED IN A NASTY ACCIDENT-- SMASHED BEYOND REPAIR.



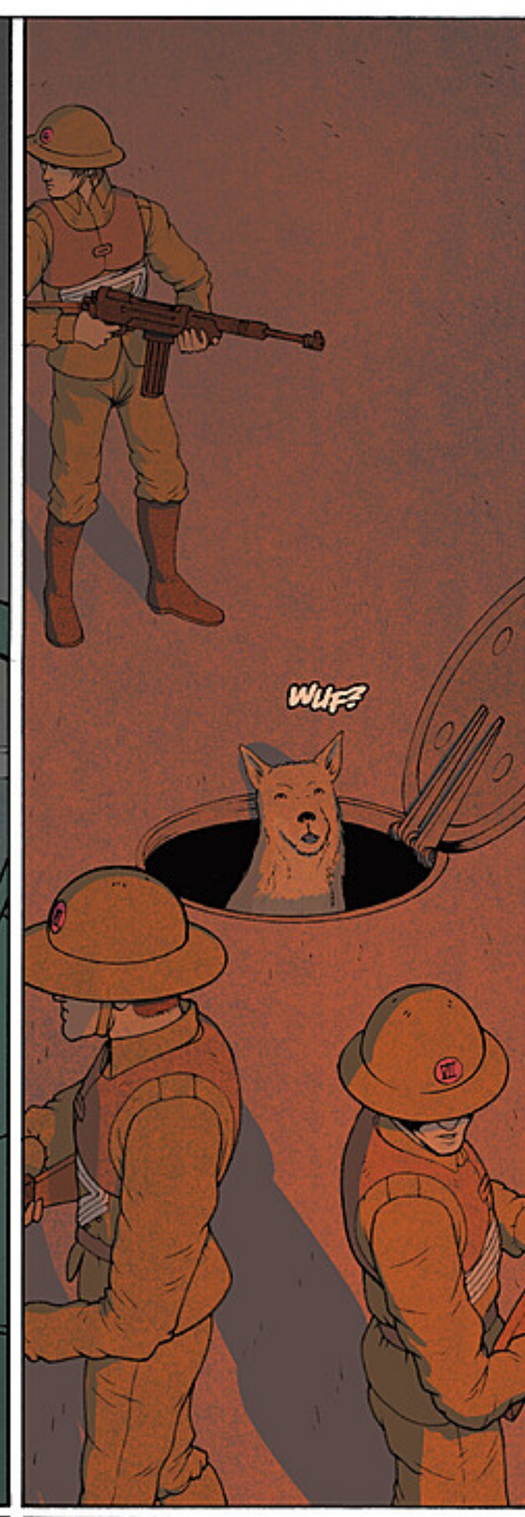

THEY'RE HERE.


"THE SLIP KIDS ARE HERE!"

KIDS, WE HAVE TO GO NOW.
GO? BUT IT'S A PARTY.
REMEMBER WHAT WE TOLD YOU ABOUT MAXINE? SHE'S MORE THAN JUST OUR MOTORHOME.
SHE'S LIKE A GIANT STORE FOR ALL THE SEEDS AND STUFF.
THAT'S RIGHT. SEEDS AND SEEDLINGS, TISSUE AND CELL SAMPLES, FREEZE-DRIED SPERM AND EMBRYOS FOR ALL THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS WE COULD GET HOLD OF.
EVEN FOR PEOPLE.
LIKE NOAH'S ARK?
EXACTLY LIKE THAT, MOLL. AND NOW WE HAVE TO TAKE MAXINE OUT INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE, SO WHEN THE PARTY'S OVER...
WHAT? WHAT HAPPENS THEN?
WELL... ...WE'LL FIND OUT WHEN IT HAPPENS, WON'T WE?
TUBE

"I HEAR YOU, BOBBY. I REMEMBER EVERYTHING YOU TOLD ME."
"WHEN EVERYONE IN THE LIFE HOUSE IS FINALLY UNITED, PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY, SPIRITUALLY, THE MUSIC WILL MANIFEST IN A HARMONIOUS SYMPHONY.
"THE MELODY OF THE FLOWING RIVER BECOMES THE ROLLING CRASH OF WAVES ON A BEACH, ADVANCING, RECEDING, FASTER, MORE POWERFUL, THE WAVES THAT WILL WASH US ALL AWAY INTO AN OCEAN OF SOUND."
"IT'S HAPPENING, IT'S REALLY HAPPENING. A THOUSAND THOUSAND NOTES, A MILLION PEOPLE CHEERING, THE SOUNDS OF HUMANITY, COMING INTO SYNCH, BECOMING ONE..."

EMERGENCY
EXIT
WATCH YOUR
STEP


WUF?

ARF ARF

WHERE DID THIS CREATURE COME FROM?
APPEARS TO HAVE EMERGED FROM A MANHOLE OVER THERE, MA'AM.
GRRR!

THERE'S A SECRET WAY IN UNDERGROUND. I RECKON THAT'S THE WEAK SPOT.

THE UNDERGROUND ENTRANCE. IT'S OPEN!

THIS IS AMAZING. LOOK AT MARY. IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S CONDUCTING THE MUSIC.
YEAH, LOVELY. NOW SNAP OUT OF IT AND GET THAT TAPE OVER TO THE BOFFINS.
THAT MUST BE THEM OVER THERE. LOOK SHARP SO WE CAN GET THIS OVER WITH.
UM, STUPID QUESTION BUT WHY HAVE YOU GOT YOUR GUN OUT? WE'RE ALL FRIENDS IN HERE.
CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL, SON.
I ALWAYS LIKE TO HAVE A LETHAL WEAPON READY IN ALL SITUATIONS.
OH, MY SAINTED AUNT! I DON'T BELIEVE IT. SHE'S *HERE!*
GET MOVING! I'LL DEAL WITH THEM.

UFF...

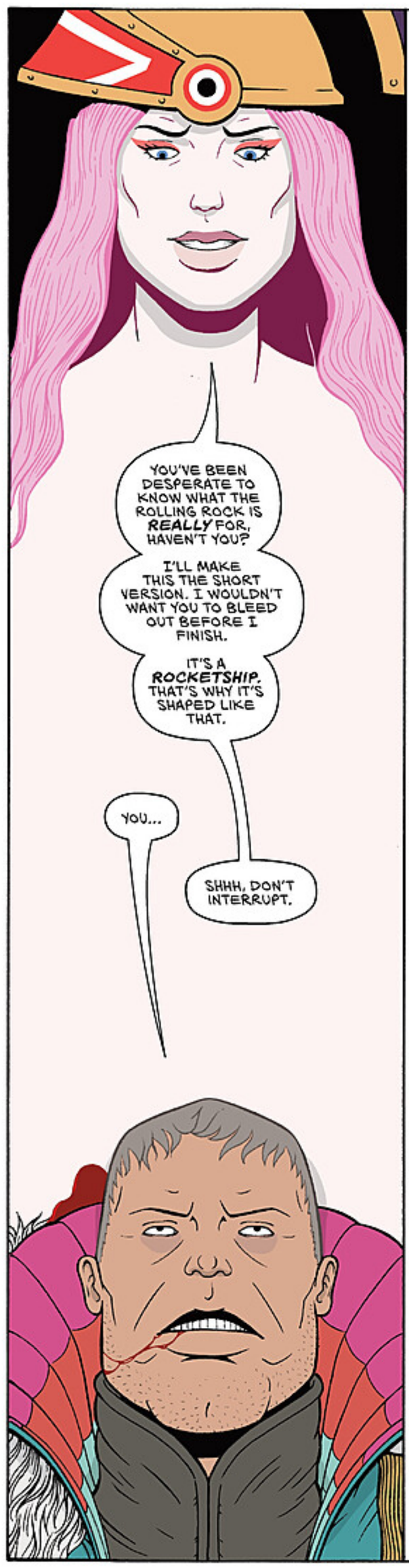
THAT MUST HURT. POOR BRICK, YOU BROUGHT THIS ON YOURSELF, YOU KNOW.

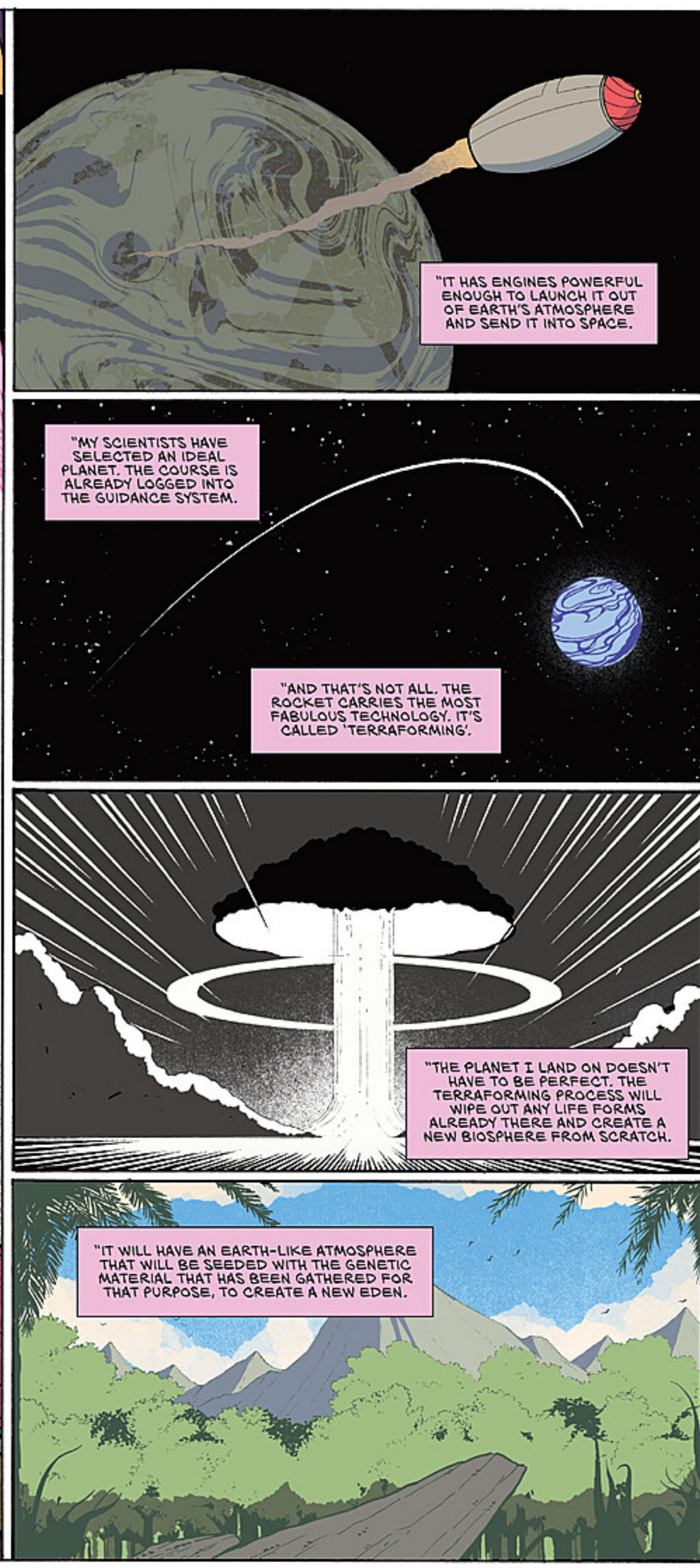
YOU MADE A BAD CHOICE. I WOULD HAVE TAKEN YOU ALL THE WAY WITH ME.

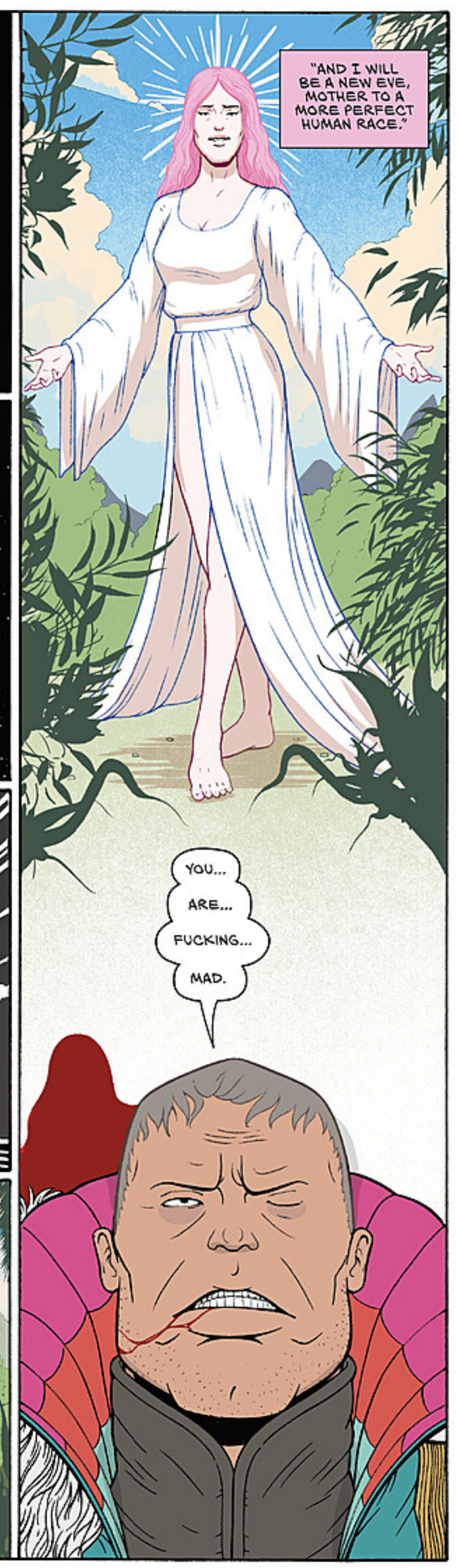
ALL THE...KOF... ALL THE WAY TO HELL...

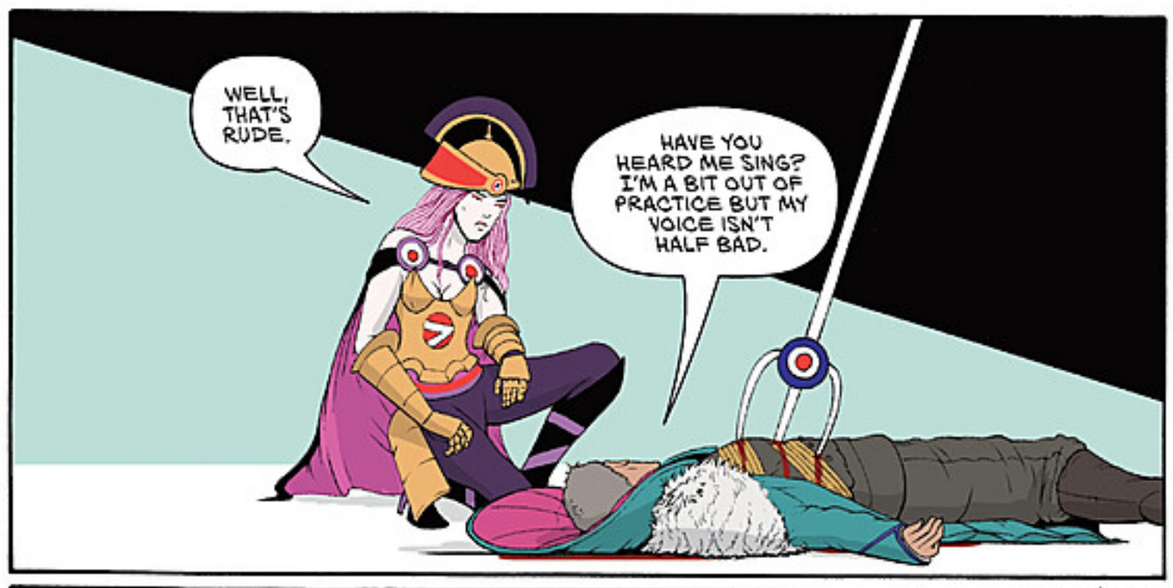
MORE LIKE PARADISE, ACTUALLY.

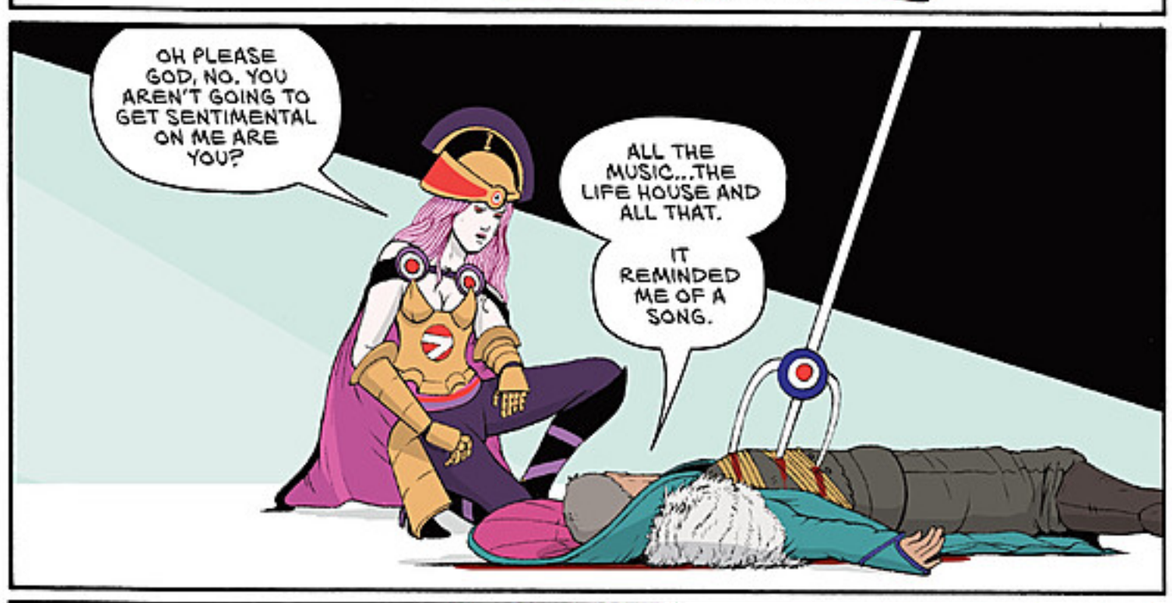
SHALL I TELL YOU ABOUT IT? I'VE GOT A MINUTE WHILE MY CRACK TROOPS MOP UP THIS RABBLE.


YOU'VE BEEN DESPERATE TO KNOW WHAT THE ROLLING ROCK IS REALLY FOR, HAVEN'T YOU?
I'LL MAKE THIS THE SHORT VERSION. I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO BLEED OUT BEFORE I FINISH.
IT'S A ROCKETSHIP. THAT'S WHY IT'S SHAPED LIKE THAT.
YOU...
SHHH, DON'T INTERRUPT.

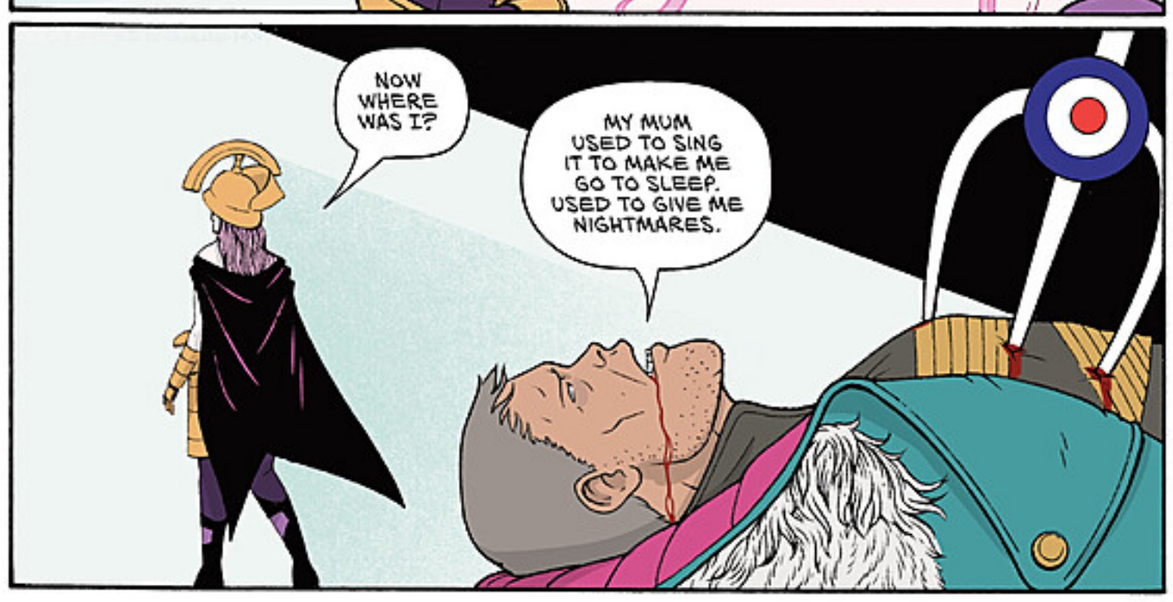

"IT HAS ENGINES POWERFUL ENOUGH TO LAUNCH IT OUT OF EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE AND SEND IT INTO SPACE.
"MY SCIENTISTS HAVE SELECTED AN IDEAL PLANET. THE COURSE IS ALREADY LOGGED INTO THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM.
"AND THAT'S NOT ALL. THE ROCKET CARRIES THE MOST FABULOUS TECHNOLOGY. IT'S CALLED 'TERRAFORMING'.
"THE PLANET I LAND ON DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT. THE TERRAFORMING PROCESS WILL WIPE OUT ANY LIFE FORMS ALREADY THERE AND CREATE A NEW BIOSPHERE FROM SCRATCH.
"IT WILL HAVE AN EARTH-LIKE ATMOSPHERE THAT WILL BE SEEDED WITH THE GENETIC MATERIAL THAT HAS BEEN GATHERED FOR THAT PURPOSE, TO CREATE A NEW EDEN.


"AND I WILL BE A NEW EVE, MOTHER TO A MORE PERFECT HUMAN RACE."
YOU... ARE... FUCKING... MAD.


WELL, THAT'S RUDE.
HAVE YOU HEARD ME SING? I'M A BIT OUT OF PRACTICE BUT MY VOICE ISN'T HALF BAD.


OH PLEASE GOD, NO. YOU AREN'T GOING TO GET SENTIMENTAL ON ME ARE YOU?
ALL THE MUSIC...THE LIFE HOUSE AND ALL THAT.
IT REMINDED ME OF A SONG.

THANKFULLY, I BROUGHT EAR PLUGS.
I CAN HARDLY HEAR MYSELF THINK IN THIS PLACE AS IT IS.


NOW WHERE WAS I?
MY MUM USED TO SING IT TO MAKE ME GO TO SLEEP. USED TO GIVE ME NIGHTMARES.

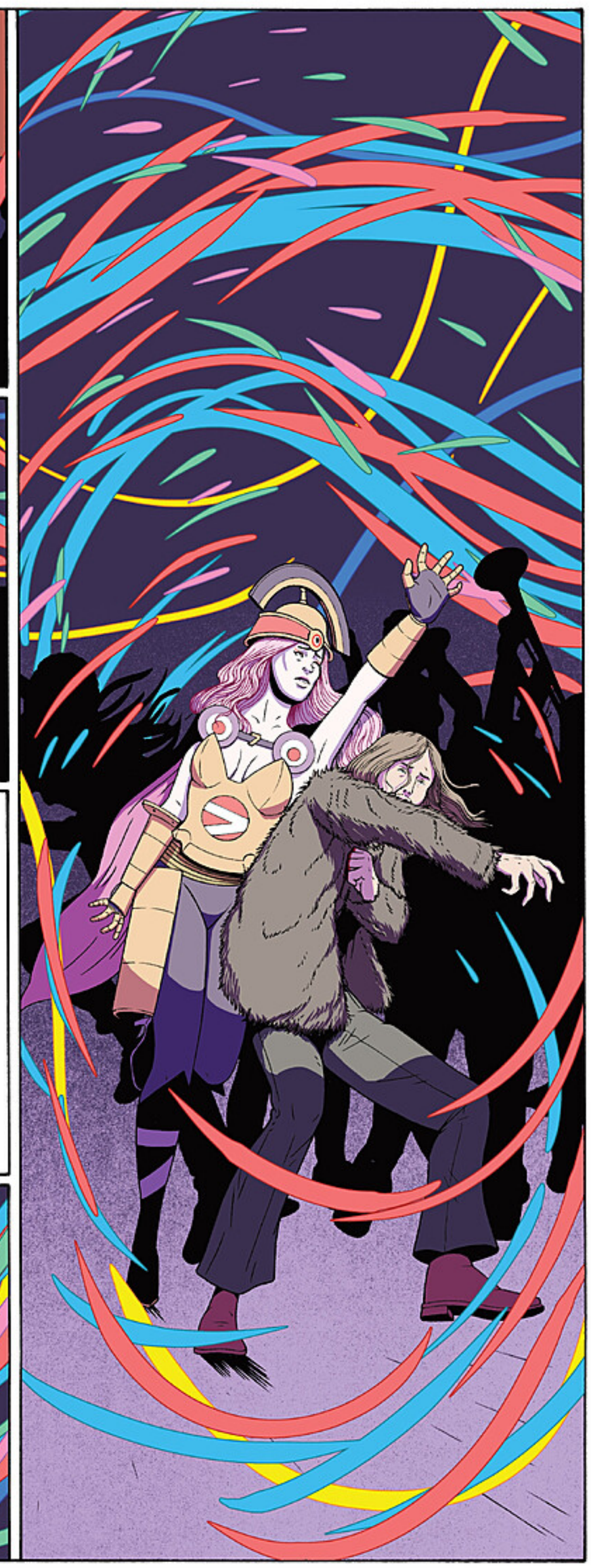
ONE FOR SORROW
TWO FOR JOY
THREE FOR A GIRL
FOUR FOR A BOY
FIVE FOR SILVER
SIX FOR GOLD
SEVEN FOR A SECRET NEVER TO BE TOLD
EIGHT FOR A WISH
NINE FOR A KISS
TEN FOR A SURPRISE YOU SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO MISS
ELEVEN FOR HEALTH
TWELVE FOR WEALTH
THIRTEEN BEWARE IT'S THE DEVIL HIMSELF

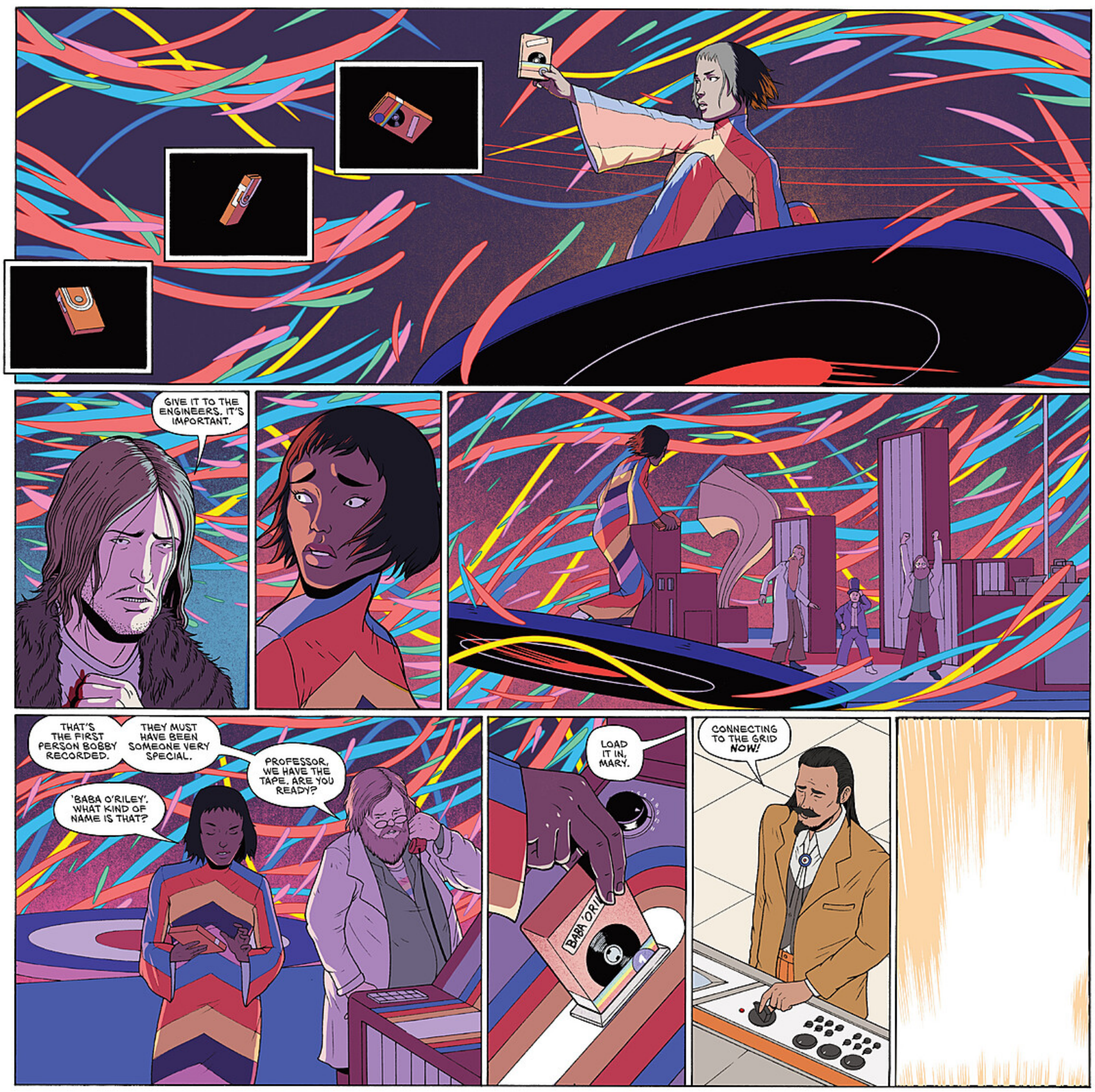
LET ME THROUGH! I'VE GOT THE TAPE!

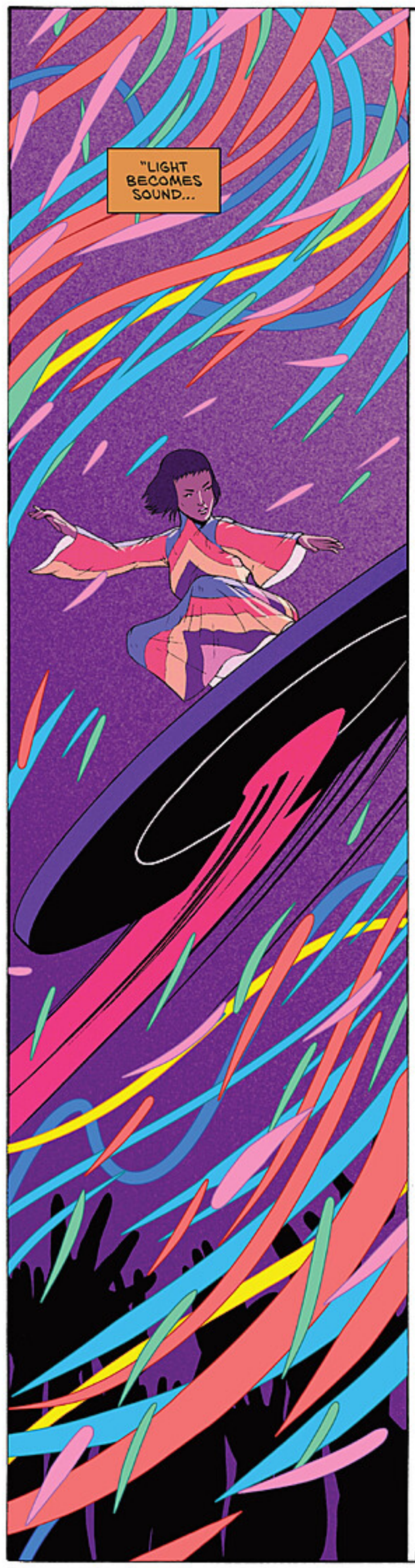
SHOOT THAT ONE. THE ONE WITH THE COAT THAT LOOKS LIKE IT HAS MANGE.

UNNH...

HENRY!




GIVE IT TO THE ENGINEERS. IT'S IMPORTANT.
THAT'S THE FIRST PERSON BOBBY RECORDED.
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN SOMEONE VERY SPECIAL.
PROFESSOR, WE HAVE THE TAPE. ARE YOU READY?
'BABA O'RILEY'. WHAT KIND OF NAME IS THAT?
LOAD IT IN, MARY.
CONNECTING TO THE GRID NOW!


"LIGHT BECOMES SOUND...

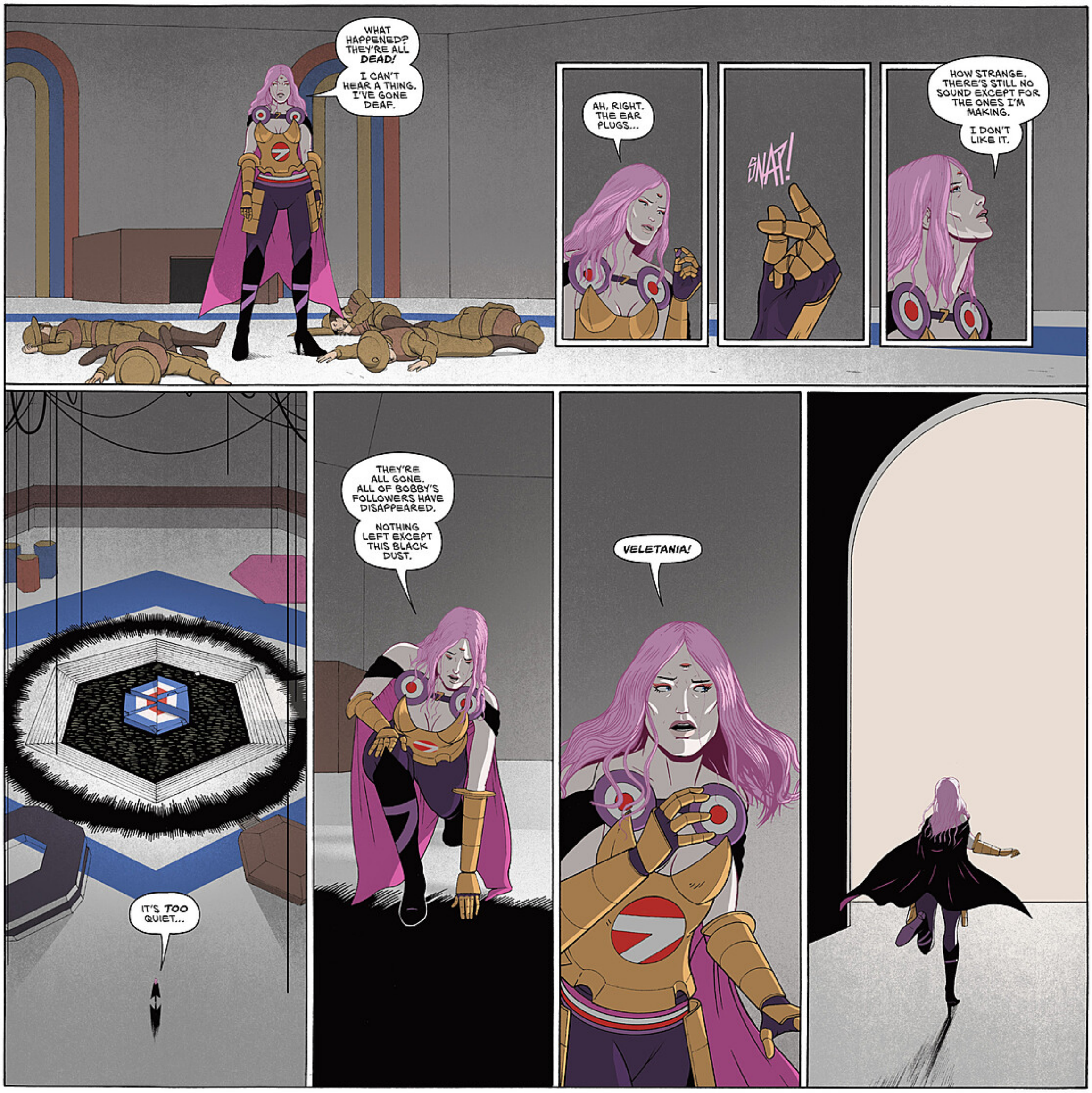
"...SOUND BECOMES COLOUR...

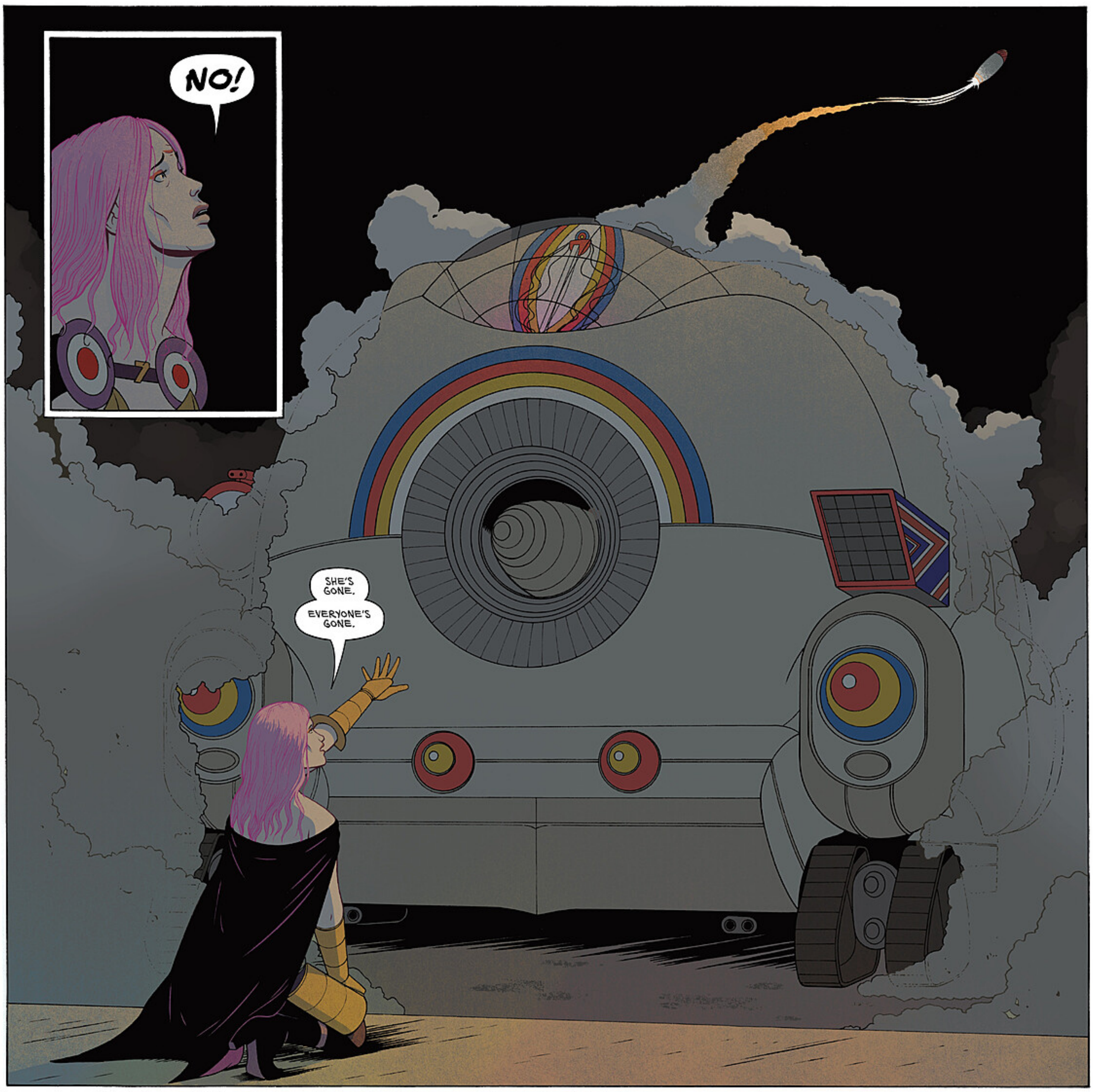
VII
VII

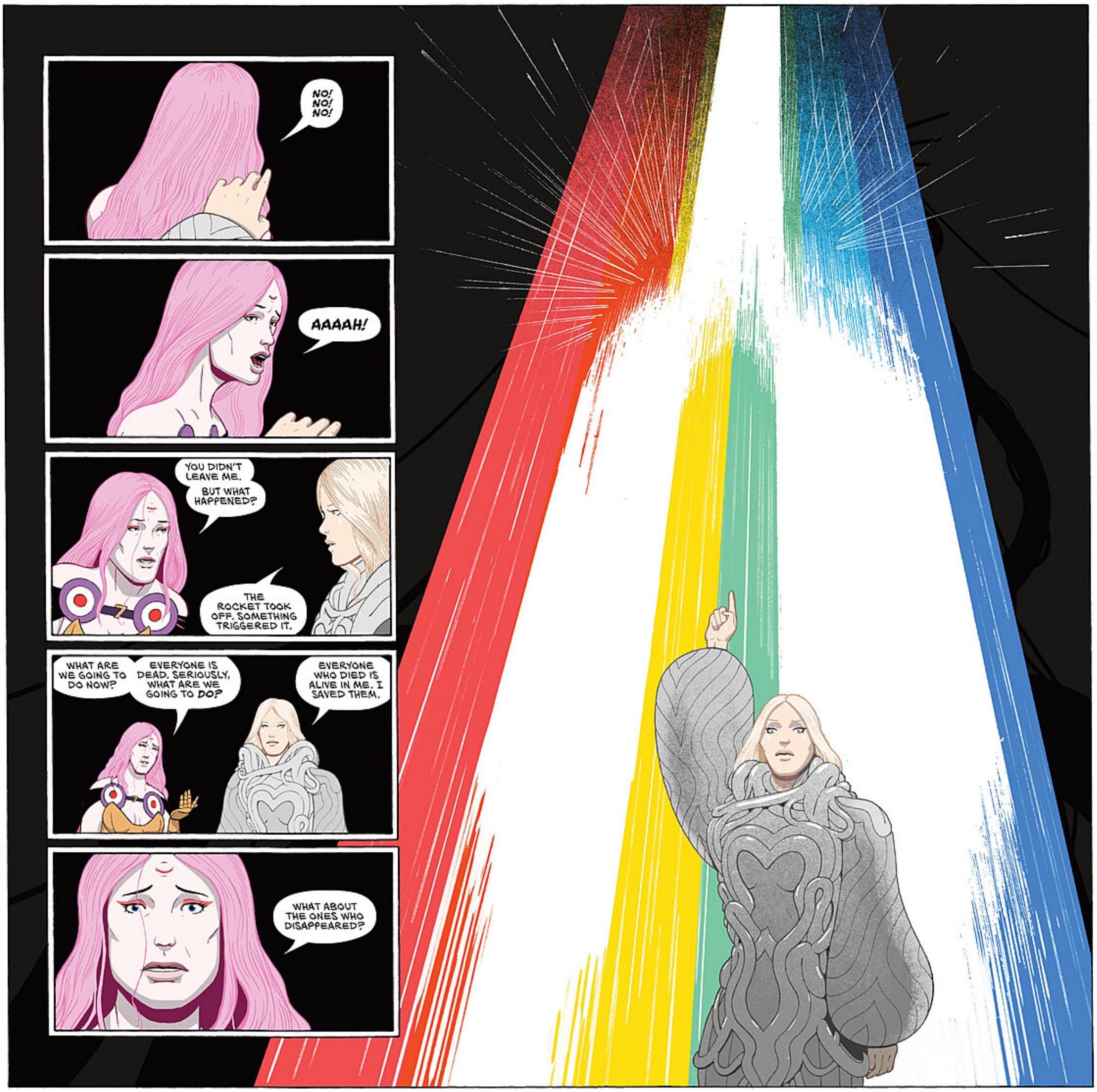
"...MUSIC IS VIBRATION...
"...MUSIC IS A GLORIOUS WAVE OF BLISS...
"...LIFTING ME UP...
"...UP...
"...UP..."

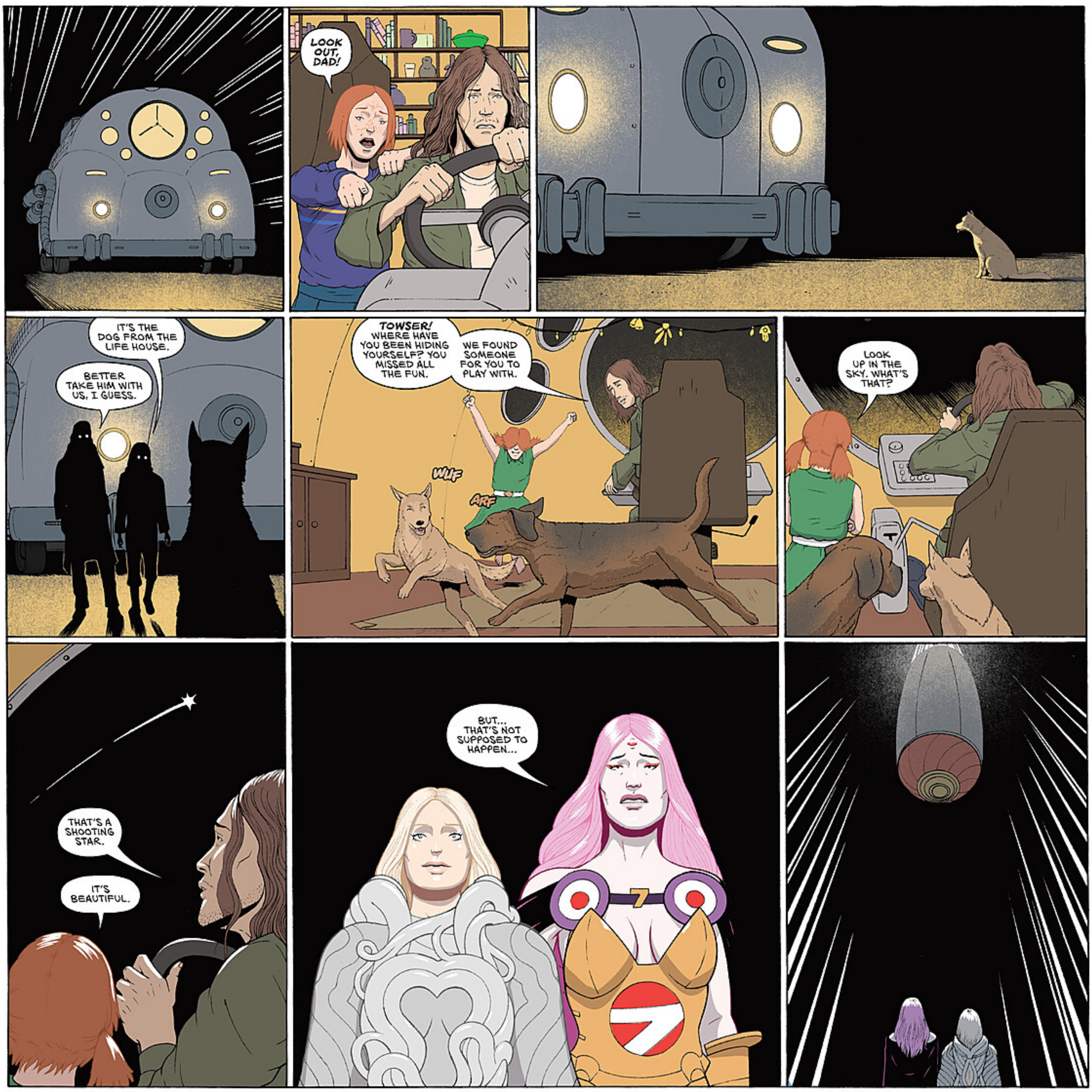
"I AM ONE WITH THE MUSIC.
"ONE WITH THE LIGHT.

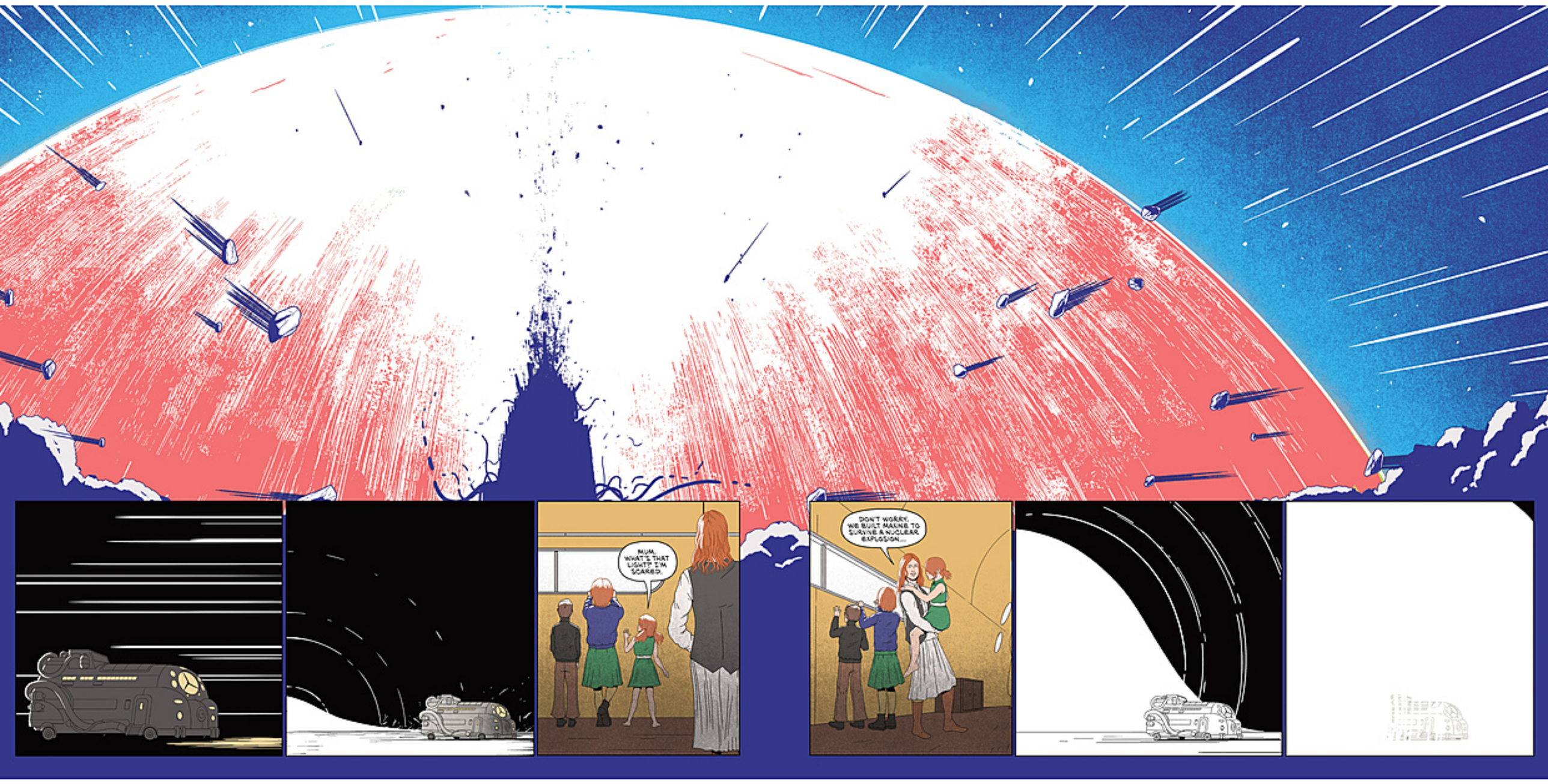
"ILLUSION DISAPPEARS.
"THERE IS NOTHING LEFT BUT REALITY.
"NOTHING BUT THE ONE NOTE."


WHAT HAPPENED? THEY'RE ALL DEAD!
I CAN'T HEAR A THING. I'VE GONE DEAF.
AH, RIGHT. THE EAR PLUGS...
SNAP!
HOW STRANGE. THERE'S STILL NO SOUND EXCEPT FOR THE ONES I'M MAKING.
I DON'T LIKE IT.
IT'S TOO QUIET...
THEY'RE ALL GONE. ALL OF BOBBY'S FOLLOWERS HAVE DISAPPEARED.
NOTHING LEFT EXCEPT THIS BLACK DUST.
VELETANIA!


NO!
SHE'S GONE.
EVERYONE'S GONE.


NO! NO! NO!
AAAAH!
YOU DIDN'T LEAVE ME.
BUT WHAT HAPPENED?
THE ROCKET TOOK OFF. SOMETHING TRIGGERED IT.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NOW?
EVERYONE IS DEAD. SERIOUSLY, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
EVERYONE WHO DIED IS ALIVE IN ME. I SAVED THEM.
WHAT ABOUT THE ONES WHO DISAPPEARED?

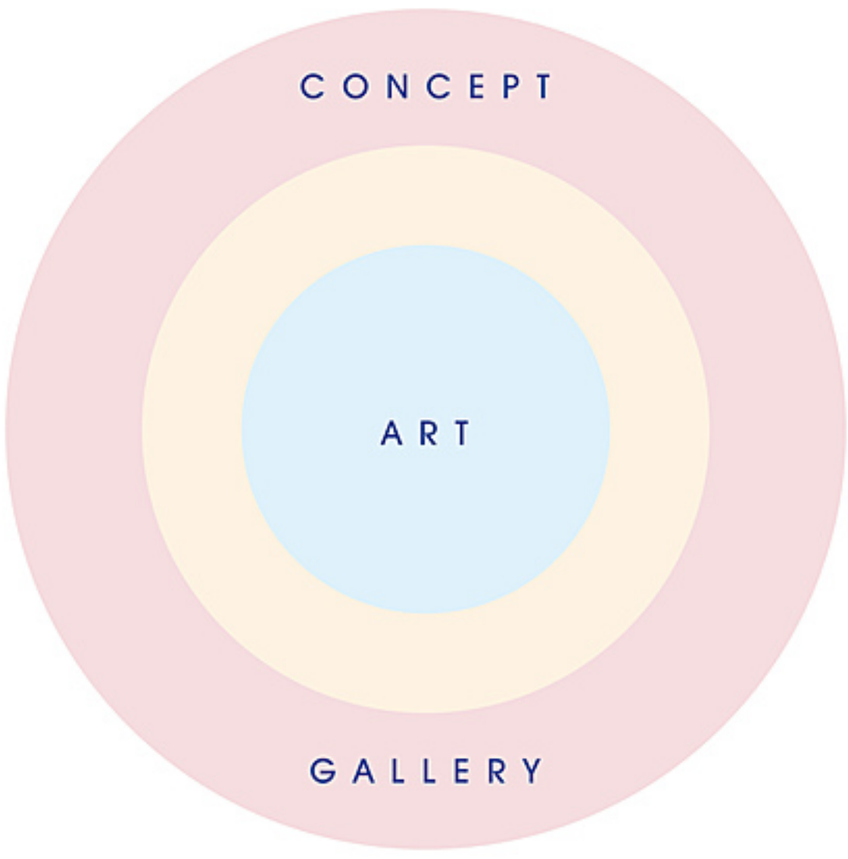

LOOK OUT, DAD!
IT'S THE DOG FROM THE LIFE HOUSE.
BETTER TAKE HIM WITH US, I GUESS.
TOWSER! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING YOURSELF? YOU MISSED ALL THE FUN.
WE FOUND SOMEONE FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH.
WUF
ARF
LOOK UP IN THE SKY. WHAT'S THAT?
THAT'S A SHOOTING STAR.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL.
BUT... THAT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN...


MUM, WHAT'S THAT LIGHT? I'M SCARED.
DON'T WORRY, WE BUILT MALINE TO SURVIVE A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION...

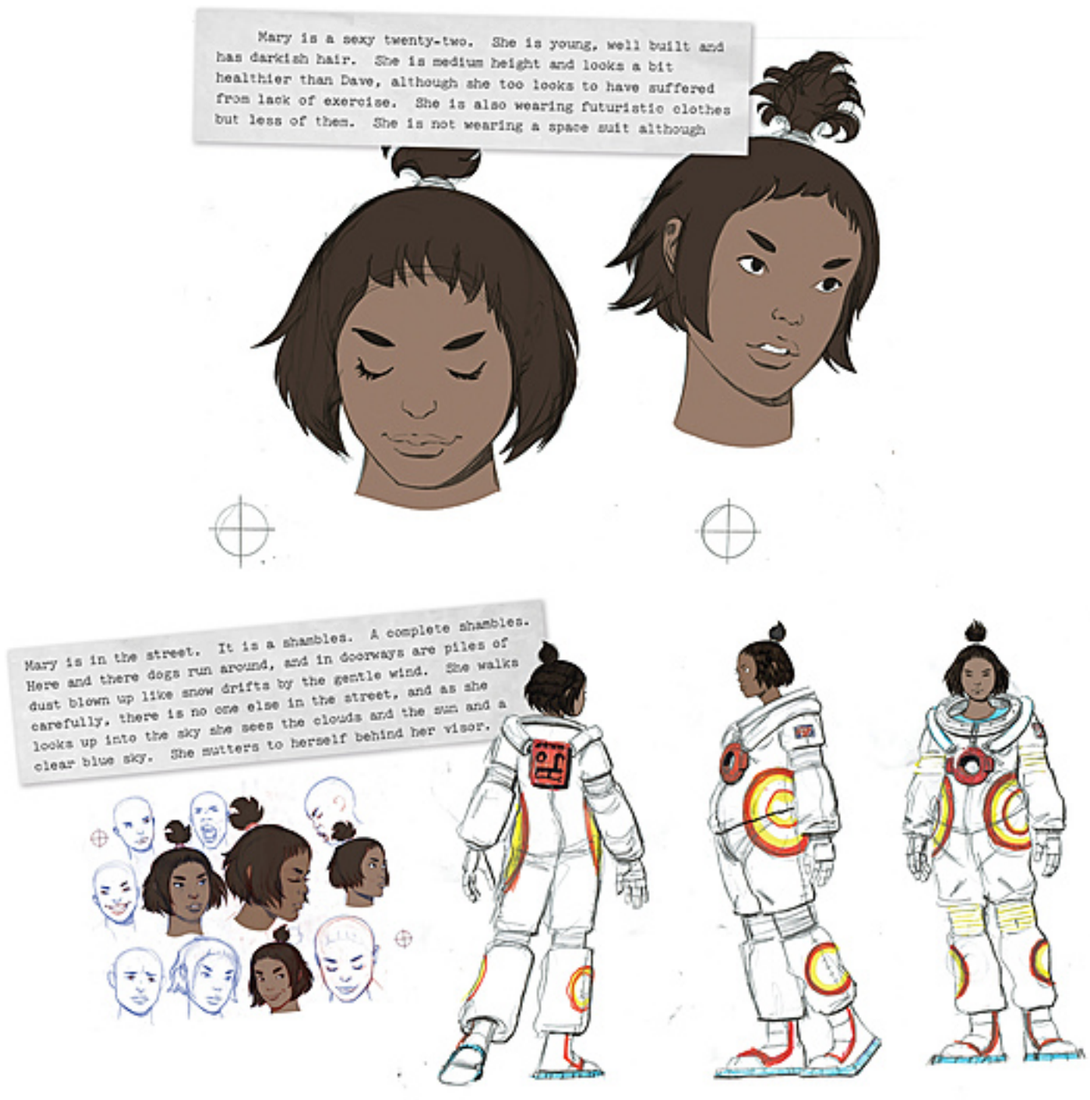
ONE NOTE

SOUNDS LIKE

A NEW DAY

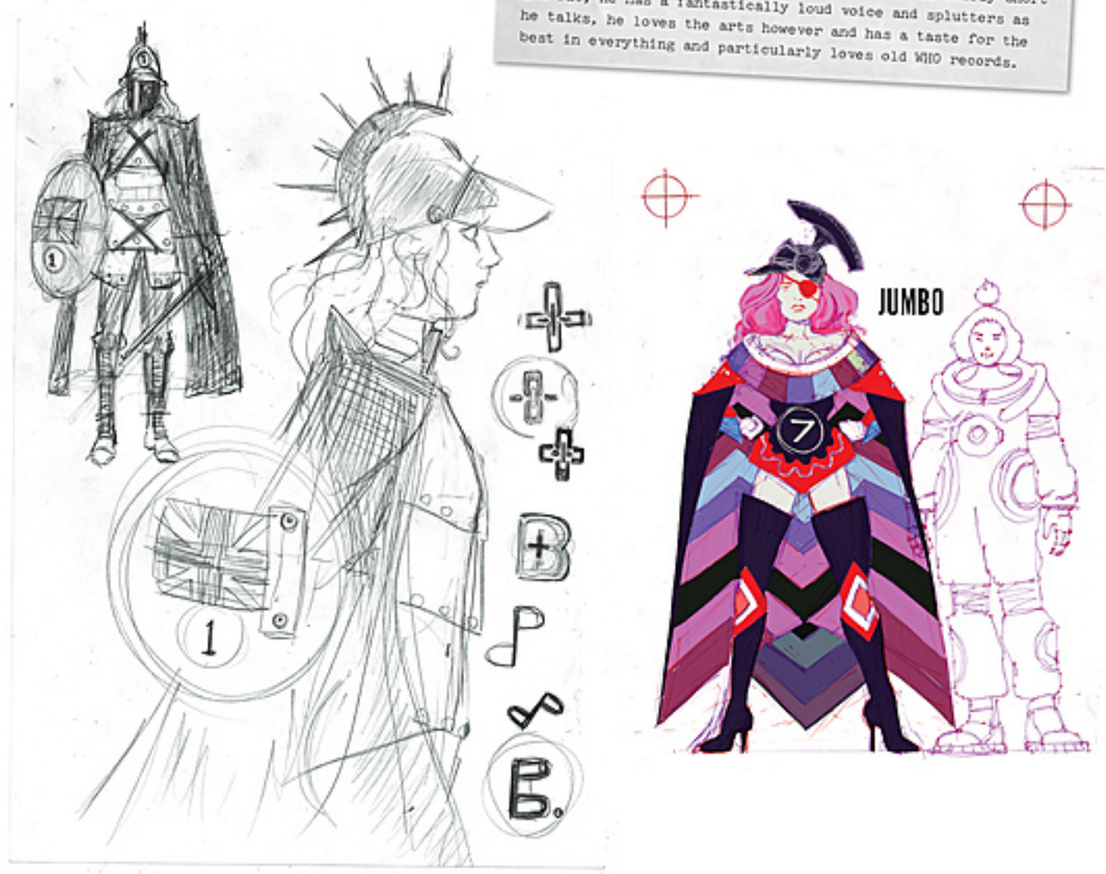


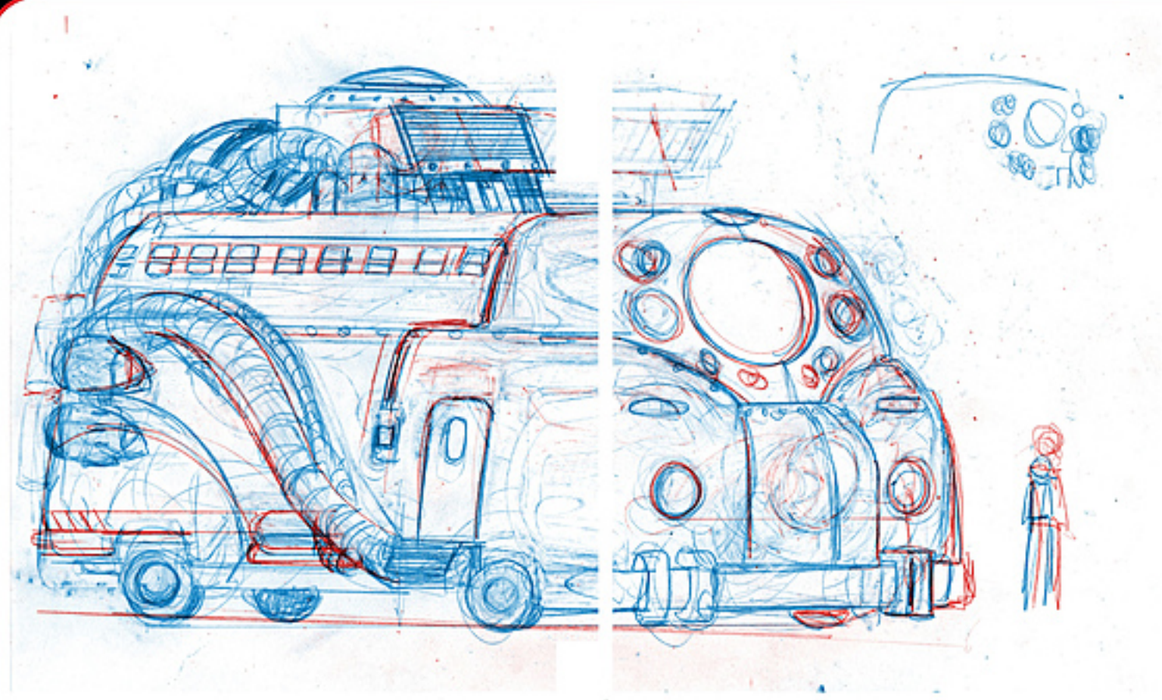
Featuring Pete Townshend's original character descriptions of the characters from his 1970 screenplay, "The Life House."



Brick is a bastard, it can be seen in his face. He is big, well built, hard working and well off and he enjoys it. He is a leader. He is a bit like Patton only quicker witted

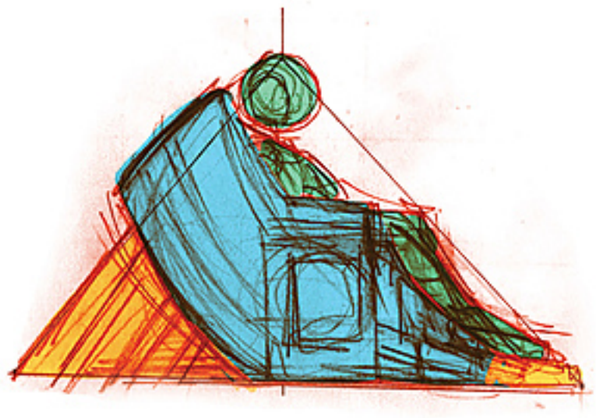
JUMBO is a super lovable, but nonetheless slimy figure. He loves luxury and excess and indulges in it and his high position without conscience. In the back of his head though there is guilt, it is usually brought on on the golf course when he plays a bad shot and his aide shouts "Oh marvellous tactic sir, thats really put me off now." He is fairly short and fat, he has a fantastically loud voice and splutters as he talks, he loves the arts however and has a taste for the best in everything and particularly loves old WHO records.

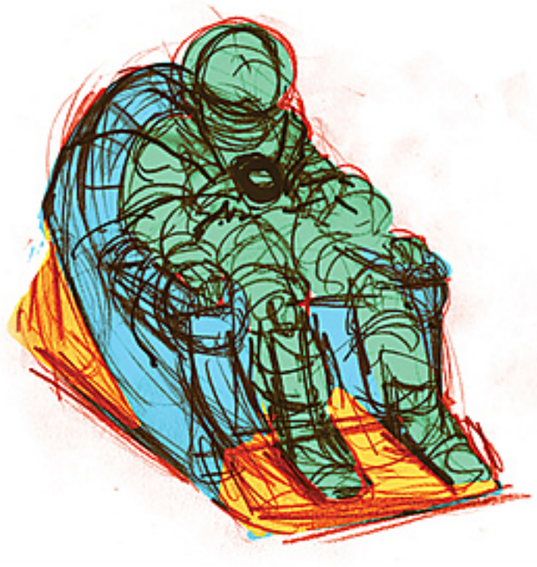


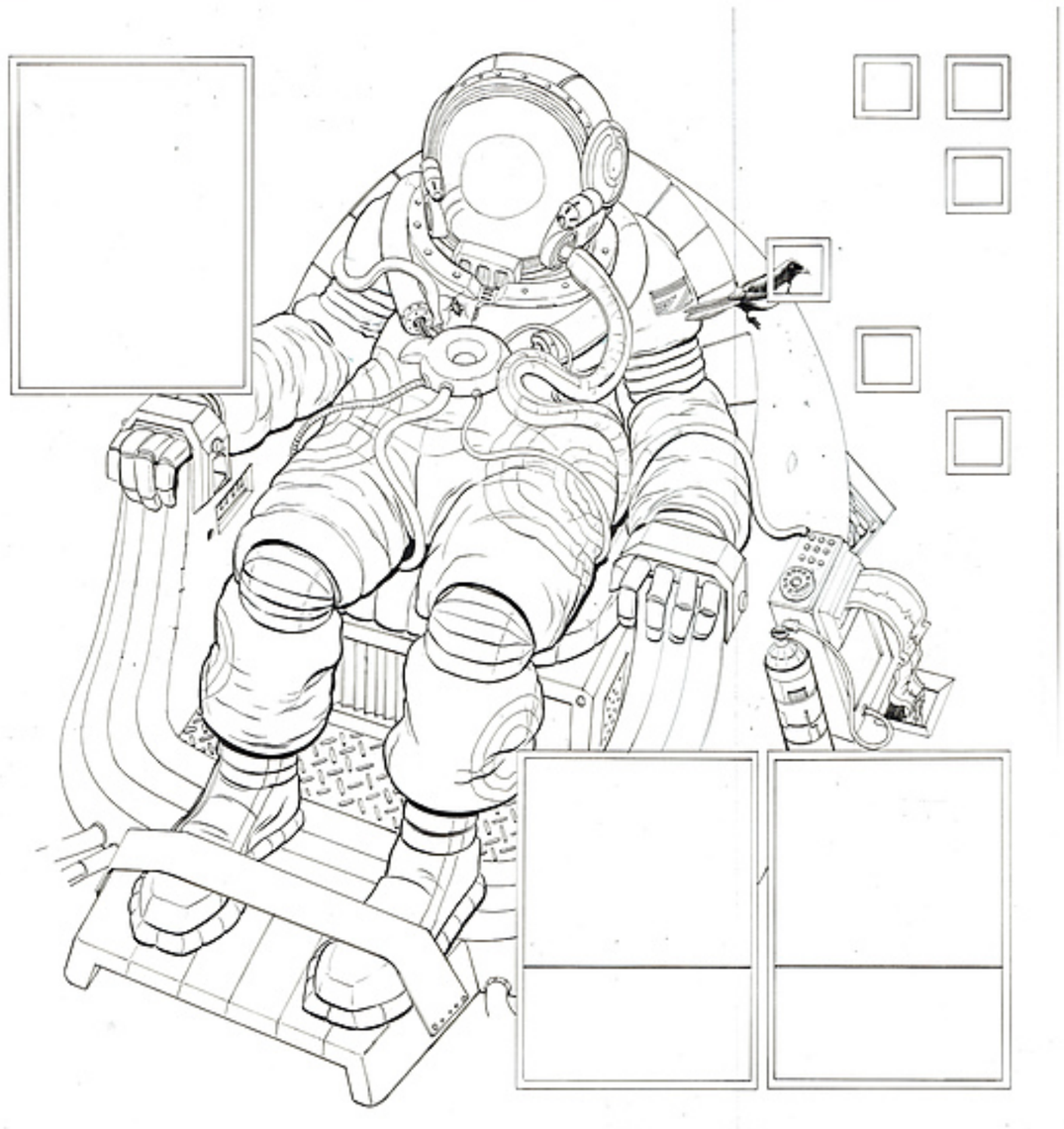


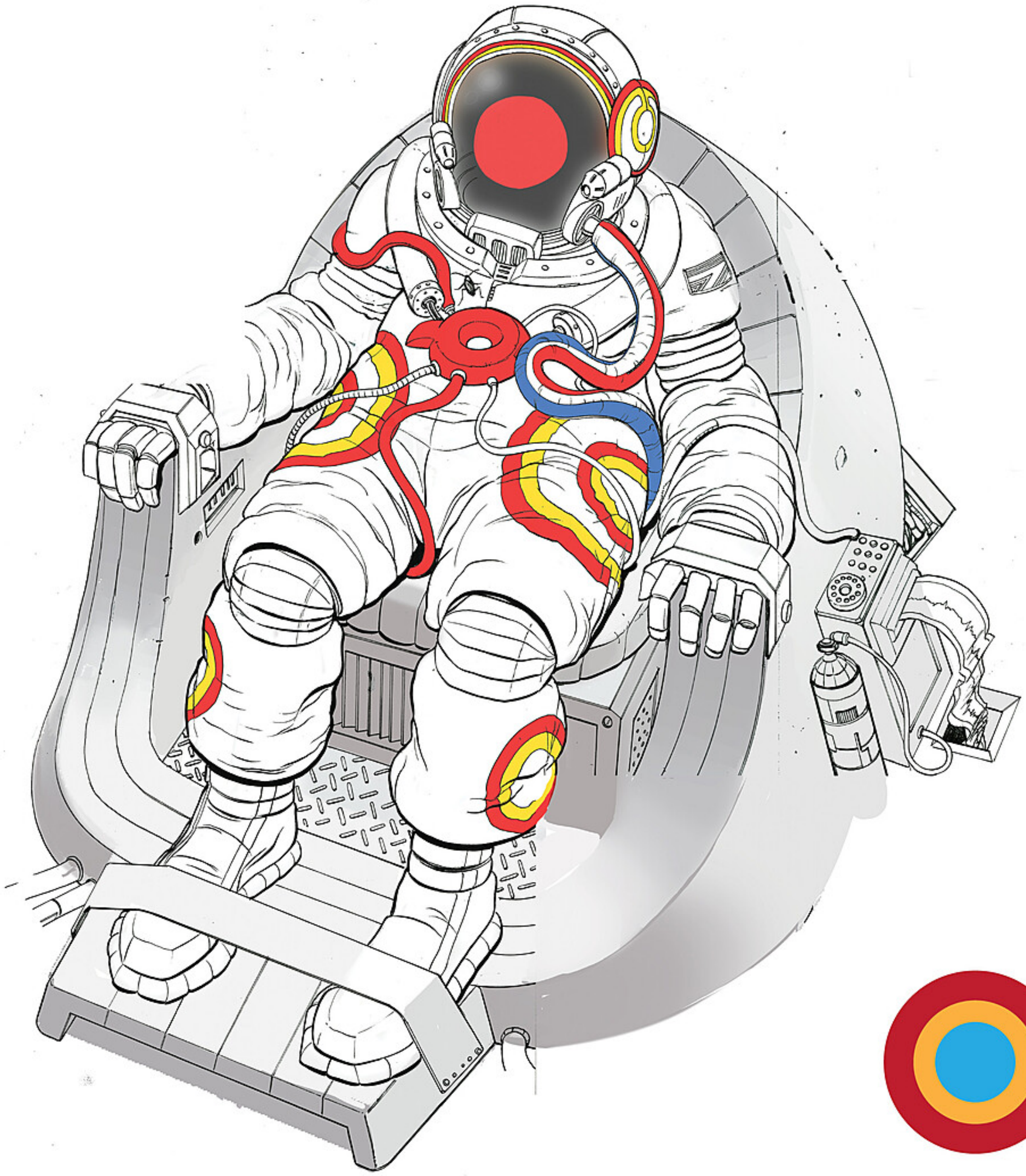
BOBBY

COVERT BOBBY







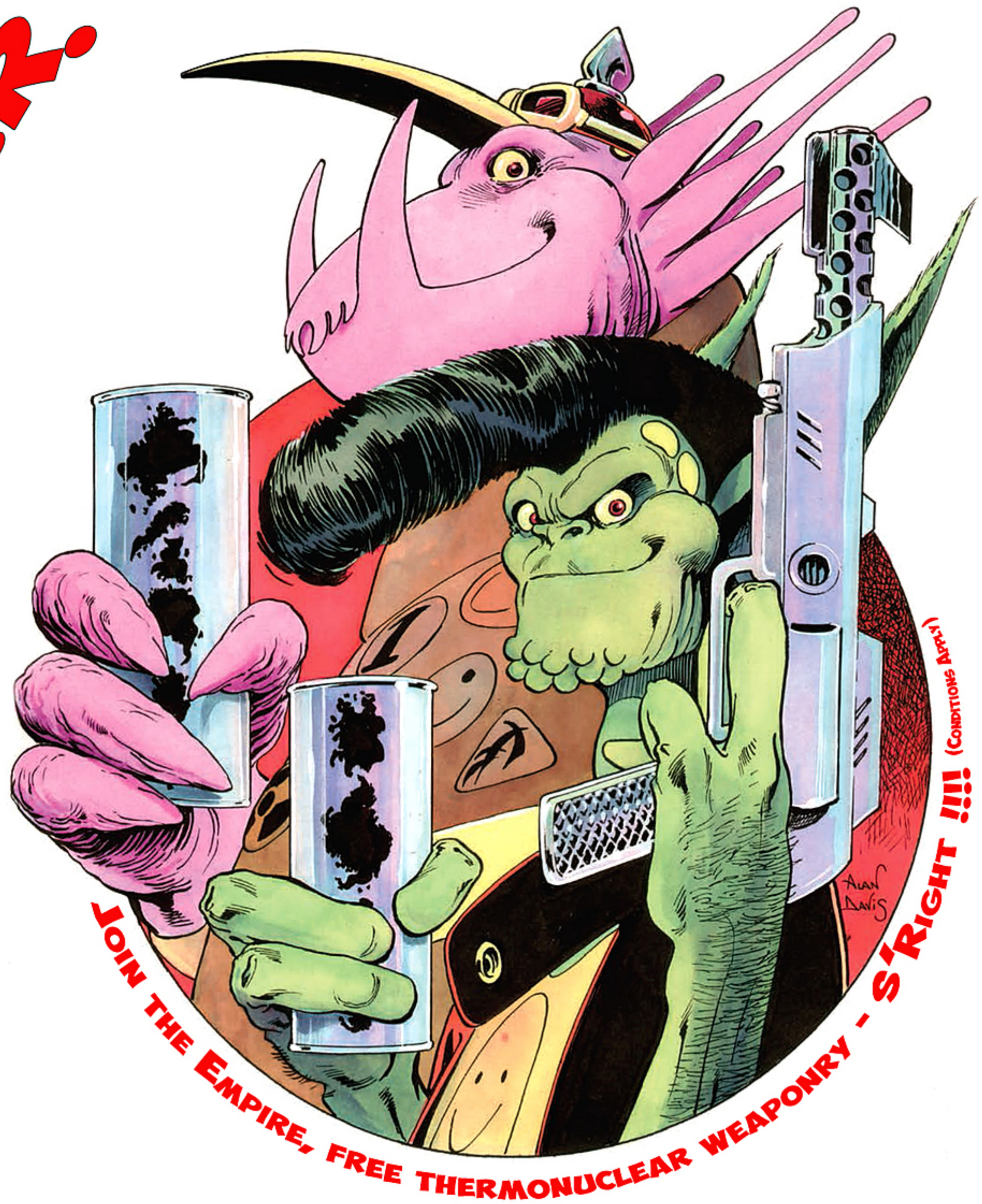


An original vision by Pete Townshend, "Life House" was set to be the follow-up rock opera to iconic British rock band The Who's highly acclaimed album, "Tommy." It evolved into the band's highest selling album, "Who's Next." "Life House" takes place in a dystopian society where catastrophe and pollution force the citizenry to submit to the totalitarian rule of an autocratic government. The leader, Jumbo 7, enforces a national lockdown, and makes politically sanctioned plug-ins compulsory. The social distraction of music is outlawed, deleted from the options of an entertainment "Grid" streaming into every home. Most citizens float meaninglessly through life wired into virtual reality. Rebellion comes in the form of a live concert promising to restore love, harmony, and balance to the world. This 172-page graphic novel adapts Townshend's original vision and tells the story the world has waited for for more than 50 years.

ROCKBOX STUDIOS

RATED T+ / TEEN PLUS IMAGECOMICS.COM

D.R. & QUINCH



K6 NW